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WORK ACCIDENTS: WHAT PSYCHOLOGY DOES IN THE FACE OF THIS PROBLEM

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Abstract: In this study, the objective was to understand the contribution of Psychology to the prevention of work accidents and the promotion of workers' health, aiming to provide elements for the practice of professionals who work in organizations. The beginning of Organizational Psychology took place in the First World War; at that time, through psychological testing, he sought to find soldiers with skills that matched the functions they would be performing. Currently, Organizational and Work Psychology focuses on issues of recruitment and selection, training and development of personnel, among other activities. The carrying out of this research is justified due to the social commitment of Psychology in promoting people's health and not only in curative actions. The present bibliographical research evidenced the need for a multidisciplinary action between work safety and human resources for the prevention of accidents, as well as the participation of the other sectors of the organization. It appears that Psychology can contribute to the development of training and programs for employee appreciation and recognition, considerably reducing work accidents. Suggestions for future studies are offered.

Keywords: Work Accidents, organizations, Psychology, Health promotion.

INTRODUCTION

Data from Social Security (2012) reveal that in Brazil, around 700,000 work accidents occur each year; considering the period from 2012 to 2016, 13,300 deaths were recorded. According to Fundação Oswaldo Cruz (2019), in the ranking of occupational accidents, Brazil occupies the fifth position, behind Colombia, France, Germany and the United States. The Ministry of Finance (2019), in the period from 2012 to 2016, recorded an expenditure of 22.171 billion reais intended for the payment

of sick pay, disability retirement and death pension for people who are victims of sequelae resulting from work activity. Ministry data also revealed that 450,000 individuals suffered a fracture while working, considering the period of the last five years.

Psychology, having its object of study the human being, a biopsychosocial being, recognizes that whatever their problem may be, it will directly influence their way of reacting to the stimuli that surround them (BOCK, FURTADO & TEIXEIRA, 2008). Therefore, it can be said that accidents at work are likely to happen even if the employee, upon admission, has received instructions, personal protective equipment (PPE) and has been trained in its correct use. Thus, this work dealt with the possible contributions of Psychology with regard to accidents at work.

This research was justified by the impacts of accidents on the lives of individuals, the high number of occurrences and the social commitment of Psychology to promote people's health and not have its focus turned only to curative actions. Through a bibliographic review, we sought to identify the possible contributions of Psychology to the prevention of work accidents and the promotion of workers' health. Furthermore, this investigation aimed to understand work accidents; the ways to avoid it and the role of Psychology on this theme. This is a qualitative research that addresses the description of the phenomena involved in work accidents and the psychologist's role in this matter.

WORK AND WORK ACCIDENTS

Work can be understood as a set of activities that are developed by human beings in order to achieve a greater objective. According to Oliveira (2017), it influences the construction of the subject's identity, self-esteem and well-being. However, this same work that places man in the world is also responsible for wear

and tear and illness (OLIVEIRA, 2017). Although work activities can pose risks to people's health, it is possible to develop actions to avoid them (FILLIPIN, JACOBI & KOPP, 2018).

Accident at work, in turn, can be understood as one that:

It occurs through the exercise of work in the service of a company or domestic employer or through the exercise of the work of the insured persons referred to in item VII of art. 11 of this Law, causing bodily injury or functional disturbance that causes death or loss or reduction, permanent or temporary, of the ability to work (BRAZIL, 1991, ART. 19).

Accidents can be divided into: 1) typical, which occur during the course of work; 2) from occupational diseases, which are a result of the exercise of the function, for example, Burnout (FILLIPIN, JACOBI & KOPP, 2018), repetitive strain injury (RSI), respiratory diseases, skin diseases, hearing problems and psychosocial diseases (OLIVEIRA, 2017) and; 3) commuting accidents, those that occur before or after the workday (BRASIL, 2020).

The increase in accidents is related to changes in the world of work that have occurred throughout history. The authors Oliveira (2004) and Oliveira (2017) point out that in 1760, when the Industrial Revolution broke out in England and the United Kingdom, the business system, concerned only with making a profit, even hired children as collaborators. The workday was exhausting, ranging from fifteen to eighteen hours a day, with low pay. In addition, the factory environment was unhealthy and the working conditions were precarious, offering imminent risks to workers' health (OLIVEIRA, 2017). Between the 1970s and 1990s, statistics from the National Institute of Social Security (INSS) revealed that more than 27 million occupational accidents occurred in Brazil, of which 87,000 were fatal (SILVA, 2015).

The Industrial Revolution, therefore, brought about changes in the production system in the world, directly affecting the work and quality of life of the working class. It must be noted that the processes of health and work-related illness are research targets not only at the national level, but also internationally, since the damage caused to this class has repercussions on their professional, family and social life. (LEITE & GONÇALVES, 2009).

In periods of slavery and paid servitude, when accidents and casualties were not concerned, these problems existed without being recognized as they are today. The social problems caused by accidents at work and occupational diseases have been the object of many studies and recommendations, depending on the extent that they assume in the scope of society. Just imagine the number of people with total and permanent incapacity for work, victims of accidents or occupational diseases and dependent, today, on social security (ZOCCHIO, 2002, p. 81).

For Zocchio (2002), occupational diseases and accidents at work have always existed and also have social repercussions. There is currently a concern about these facts since the consequences (personal damages ranging from injuries to mutilations; diseases with and without the need for leave, partial or total disabilities or death) of accidents have repercussions on the socioeconomic sphere, causing economic and financial losses. for companies and damage to society, since the cost of the injured person depends directly on the labor/production of the society in which he is inserted and this is materialized with the annual expenses of Social Security destined to the assistance of the victim. (ZOCCHIO, 2002).

Several causes involved in work accidents are found in the literature. Zocchio (2002) defends the existence of close events that include situations of risk or danger,

including the use of unsafe methods, hostile environment, disorganization, inadequate technology, lack of control or protection and disinterest or apathetic behavior of people in relation to the subject. Freitas (1974) believes that personal factors can influence work accidents. Although the work material may present some defect in its functioning, the person who handles it also presents some conditions such as “skill, attitude, perception, motivation, negligence or lack of knowledge” (FREITAS, 1974, p. 26). Thus, the work materials, the person who handles them and the structure where the work activity takes place constitute a “climate with relevant psychosocial aspects” which, in turn, becomes conducive to the occurrence of accidents (FREITAS, 1974, p. 27).

Zocchio (2002) also uses Heinrich’s theory, described in 1931 in his book entitled: *Accident Prevention: a scientific approach*, to explain the participation of men in the work accident. According to Heinrich, the accident would be linked to two factors: the first would be that the subject has something hereditary or would be socially influenced, thus constituting negative personality characteristics and from this emerge unsafe acts (the way people expose themselves to risk such as, for example, not using PPE, being close to suspended loads, among others) and failures; the second relates to unsafe conditions, comprising irregularities in equipment/physical environment that put the worker’s life at risk, such as defective machinery, cleanliness of the place, inadequate lighting, among others. But, according to Zocchio (2002, p. 96),

it is debatable whether or not people are prone to accidents. It is preferable to accept the idea that there are health conditions, moods and temperaments that, in certain circumstances or occasions, provide conditions for the occurrence of accidents at work.

Among the health conditions cited by the

author are: 1) the subject’s aptitude for the task: as a result of unemployment, people sometimes adhere to a job proposal to provide for their family, but they do not always receive training in the function or/and has time to adapt; 2) vocation: some individuals choose a profession because of the status it represents in society or because of parental influence. There is a lack of knowledge about their own self and little reflection on their will and; 3) professional displacements: include those subjects whose work was arranged by third parties, as is the case, for example, of referrals made by renowned people from a certain institution.

Accordingly, Chiavenato (2014, p. 415) points out that:

a person predisposed to accident in one type of work may not be in another activity. This predisposition appears to be situational. Personality traits (such as emotional instability or low resistance to frustration) can distinguish people predisposed to accidents in activities that involve risk. Lack of motor skills can predispose to accidents when the activity requires excellent motor coordination. Therefore, to say that a person, in general, is more vulnerable to suffering an accident is wrong, as there are other factors that act as agents in this context, such as, for example, the absence of suitable skills to develop a certain task or motivation for the task. activity.

The disregard for accidents until they become real is notorious. Suffering, injuries, treatment and recovery are inherent to the injured person; added to this, the psychological suffering that the victim can present as a result of their situation is highlighted. Furthermore, it is important to point out that the subject’s family is not outside of this logic: uncertainties, concerns, anxieties, changes in the standard of living, among others, are also stressing factors. (ZOCCHIO, 2002). Therefore, everyone involved in this event suffers and can become psychically ill. Considering these various

damages to workers' health, it is urgent to think about how Psychology can contribute to the prevention of work accidents and the promotion of workers' health.

PSYCHOLOGY AND PREVENTION OF ACCIDENTS AT WORK

Psychology is a science and profession that aims to "describe, predict, and explain" human behavior and mental processes (COSTA, 2019, p. 18). Throughout its trajectory, several currents of thought emerged, such as Psychoanalysis, Behaviorism, Gestalt, which developed giving rise to other areas of action beyond the clinical context. One of these areas is Organizational and Work Psychology (POT), which studies the human being in the work context, seeking to understand the man-work relationship, as well as the individual and group processes in this context. (COSTA, 2019).

According to Spector (2012), the milestone of POT took place in the First World War, when it was still called Industrial Psychology. In the context of the War, psychologists, led by Robert Yerkes, applied tests to army recruits, since it was difficult to find soldiers with skills consistent with the functions they would be performed. After the two great wars, the devastating scenario in which people found themselves generated several problems. As a result, Psychology had its action aimed at assisting individuals who were victims of these events, acting in a remedial way, seeking to repair the damage caused (SEIBEL, POLETTI & KOLLER, 2016).

Currently, POT focuses on issues of recruitment and selection, training and development of personnel, performance evaluation (SPECTOR, 2012) and is also concerned with the relationships established in the work environment, whose field is called organizational behavior (COSTA, 2019). Thus, POT is an expanding area where several

topics can be studied, such as work accidents. As highlighted, the statistical data regarding work accidents show that the subject is worrying and reveals an open field for the psychologist's performance.

As highlighted by Zocchio (2002), work accidents can happen to any subject, requiring the development of more effective actions to prevent them. The field also includes the prevention of occupational diseases considering 1) "concrete safety", linked to safe working conditions that involve organization, cleaning, adequate technology, among others, which must be ensured by the company, and; 2) "abstract security", characterized by the sensation and feeling that employees have in relation to what they are assured of in terms of protection against these accidents and diseases (ZOCCHIO, 2002, p. 35).

The human being is constituted through social relationships through which he apprehends reality, internalizes the rules of coexistence, values, and morals. Thus, the prevention of accidents also depends on a good interpersonal and intersectoral relationship established between the organization's members. Although it is the role of occupational safety and medicine professionals to develop accident prevention actions, they will only be effective if all employees get involved with such proposals. This way, institutions have the role of contributing so that each employee understands such processes and actions, since this is important for the effectiveness of the prevention of work accidents and occupational diseases. (ZOCCHIO, 2002).

In this context, Psychology would base its action on the investigation of personal aspects, seeking to explain the riches, faults or omissions that can contribute to the triggering of a dangerous state. It would also act objectively by analyzing techniques that offer ways to guide the work, use of motivational methods, fostering the group's

awareness of such actions in order to reduce the etiological conditions of accidents. (FREITAS, 1974). Thus, according to Freitas (1974, p. 28), Psychology in the prevention of accidents “contributes to a more satisfactory adjustment of man to his task”. For this, the professional would use guidance to employees; in the analysis of the positions, it would open space for the definition of the “psychophysiological requirements”, considering the vision of the security area to define such requirements and, based on the subjects’ personal traits, it would predict the probability of accidents. (FREITAS, 1974, p. 28).

Zocchio (2002) adds the idea that safety and occupational medicine must work together with the Human Resources (HR) sector to prevent accidents, but this multidisciplinary action does not always happen. It must be considered that:

the human resources sector itself does not assimilate prevention activities with the same criteria and the same administrative expression that it gives to other activities in the sector; the human resources leadership is not prepared to defend administratively, conceptually and technically the prevention activities as it knows how to do with other activities in the sector; the same leadership is not even prepared to know what to demand and what to expect from the security service (ZOCCHIO, 2002, p. 74).

In order for safety, occupational medicine and human resources to work together, time and skills development of the professionals involved are necessary. It is worth mentioning that each one must be aware of their role, avoiding conflicts and invasion of space. (ZOCCHIO, 2002). To this end, the work must encompass two work fronts: the first is in charge of Psychology/HR, linked to the recruitment and selection process, and must seek employees who adapt “to the demands of the company’s work” (ZOOCHIO, 2002, p.

74).); the second encompasses the training processes, requiring simultaneous action by the sectors in the integration of new hires, covering contents such as the history, rules and rules of the company, as well as with security measures. In addition, courses, training and recycling can be included in accordance with the provisions of each service category. (ZOOCHIO, 2002).

Still according to Zocchio (2002), the prevention of accidents occurs from actions such as avoiding unsafe acts on the part of the worker and not creating unsafe conditions in the workplace. The author considers that the process of recruitment, selection, training and transfer is careful, since the actions developed in these stages can prevent accidents, also contributing to a better adaptation of the man to the task. Chiavenato (2014) corroborates the ideas of Zocchio (2002), and postulates that organizations invest in training in order to train and develop the professionals who work there.

According to Oliveira (2017, p. 163), the training aims to develop “the motor, cognitive and interpersonal skills” of the subject. Its focus is on the present, seeking to improve the skills and competences required by a particular position, while development aims at the future. From this, the development arises where its assessment is based on current skills and competences, seeking to verify the possibilities of a given individual to ascend within the organization and occupy another (s) position (s) (CHIAVENATO, 2014).

Chiavenato (2014) adds that accident prevention programs contemplate two spheres: 1) eliminate unsafe conditions, whose responsibility is centered on occupational safety professionals. These, in turn, would be responsible for job descriptions; mapping of areas that offer hazardous conditions (proposing measures

PSYCHOLOGY AND PROMOTION OF WORKER HEALTH

The Human Resources (HR) sector can be occupied by several professionals, such as administrators, accountants or even the owner of the company. It is noteworthy that, although the presence of psychologists in organizations is not yet a reality in all institutions, this professional included in Human Resources will be able to contribute in a special way with practices of mental health promotion and insertion of people with disabilities (CYRNE, 2012).

Thus, Psychology can contribute to the construction of a happier work environment, where people feel valued and belong to the institution, significantly reducing the rates of work accidents and occupational disease. It is noteworthy that it was from 1998 onwards, with Martin Seligman facing the *American Psychological Association* (APA), that studies on the healthy aspects of people began to intensify, giving rise to Positive Psychology (RIBEIRO & SILVA, 2018). According to the Regional Council of Psychology (CRP, 2019), Positive Psychology proposes the study of the strengths and virtues, well-being and happiness of the human being, fundamental aspects for the success and maintenance of general health, both at an individual and a level. group. Thus, the action of Positive Psychology emphasizes health promotion, looking at the potential of the individual so that he can develop (SEIBEL, POLETTI & KOLLER, 2016).

According to Siqueira and Padovam (2008), there is no clear definition of well-being in the literature. It can be divided into: 1) subjective well-being (SWB), which is related to people's assessment of their lives; 2) psychological well-being (BEP), which addresses human development issues aimed at the ability to face challenges and; 3) considering that work interferes with the way we feel, investigations

to reduce or neutralize such conditions); analysis of the history of accidents seeking to identify and collect information about their causes; 2) reduce unsafe acts; in the selection process, the psychologist would use psychological tests that measure or infer emotional stability, personality, visual ability and careful performance of the subject, seeking to identify possible signs that predict the behavior of an accident.

Thus, for Oliveira (2017, p. 92), the selection process must take place based on the competencies previously established in the job description, that is, the "selection by competencies", characterized "by the clearer and more objective search for a candidate in relation to what is required by the company". With this, the recruiting psychologist may resort to psychological tests aimed at ascertaining such competences. This selection model makes the selection process more objective, making it possible to identify the behavior closest to the vacancy offered, making it easier for the subject to adapt to the company and the function. These associated factors contribute to the quality of life at work (OLIVEIRA, 2017).

It is observed, therefore, that the actions to prevent accidents at work and occupational diseases involve several components that depend on individual and collective participation. Madalozzo (2016) argues that in recent times there has been an accelerated technological advance providing better living conditions, but the procedures related to safety at work have not followed this advance in the same way. Given the above, it is necessary that Psychology also pay attention to the promotion of workers' health, acting in the construction of a healthier work environment and conducive to quality of life, contributing to well-being in the work context.

on well-being at work (BET) are currently emerging. According to Siqueira, Orengo and Peiró (2014, p. 39), BET corresponds to “a positive mental state” that includes three dimensions: satisfaction, work involvement and affective organizational commitment. Also according to Siqueira, Orengo and Peiró (2014, p. 39),

the conception of BET as a positive mental state due to the possibility of the worker experiencing periods in which positive feelings emerge within him, in an interconnected way, promoted by aspects present in the work environment (satisfaction), sensations of harmony between his professional skills and the demands imposed by the activities he performs (involvement with work) and also positive feelings directed towards the organization that employs him (affective organizational commitment).

Siqueira, Orengo and Peiró (2014) also highlight that job satisfaction originates in three categories: 1) interpersonal relationship between co-workers and supervisors; 2) activities consistent with the function performed, expressed by involvement with work associated with flow, described by Csikszentmihalyi in 1999. Flow corresponds to a state of fluidity (flow) that encompasses the objectives/goal to be achieved, existing challenges in the activities that pit the individual's skills and competencies against each other, and the immediate feedback provided by action on activities; 3) organizational rewards offered by the company (promotion and salary).

For Siqueira, Orengo and Peiró (2014), job satisfaction generates affective organizational commitment, which can be understood as a bond established between man and the organization in the face of positive affects - contentment, enthusiasm, pride, trust, among others. These feelings favor engagement at work, leading the person to invest their

energy in the work activity and feel fulfilled with it (SIQUEIRA, MARTINS, ORENGO & SOUZA, 2014). Thus, Positive Psychology provides evidence and subsidies to create “conditions (culture, structure and processes) that contribute to the recurrent expression of human qualities, potentialities and virtues, always aligned with organizational values, mission and vision” (BOEHS & SILVA, 2017, p. 45).

The concept of happiness in organizations and at work has also been discussed and, according to Boehs and Silva (2017), comprises the association of three dimensions: material of existence, relational and spiritual. The material dimension of existence focuses on the environment, comprising the physical aspects that generate the quality of life at work (BOEHS & SILVA, 2017). Thus, they correspond to safe and healthy conditions, also described by Zocchio (2002), involving organization, cleanliness, technology, equipment and the feeling that employees have in relation to the safety that the company offers against accidents and occupational diseases. The relational dimension comprises the psychosocial work environment, involving the interpersonal relationship established between the institution's members, as also presented by Zocchio (2002) and Siqueira, Orengo and Peiró (2014). According to Boehs and Silva (2017), happiness depends on this authentic relationship, since it generates other feelings such as empathy, recognition, hope, kindness. Finally, according to Boehs and Silva (2017, p. 49), in the spiritual dimension, “there are personal, professional, as well as organizational purposes seen as significant and, therefore, relevant”. Therefore, these are tasks in which the subject finds meaning and assigns meaning in the context of work.

Achor (2012, p. 46-47) argues that happy employees are more productive, “enjoy greater job security and are inclined to take fewer

days off due to illness, resign or be burnt out”. Thus, the organizational psychologist can contribute to the construction of a work environment that favors well-being through simple actions, based on the principles of Positive Psychology, and can significantly reduce work accidents as well as occupational diseases. Boehs and Silva (2017, p. 157) add that “organizations that promote quality of life, well-being and happiness at work, while promoting motivation, commitment and engagement of workers, directly reflect on organizational performance”.

Happiness at work therefore enables the emergence of healthy organizations that seek a balance between quality of life and well-being combined with productivity, quality and profitability. In the same logic of Positive Psychology, healthy organizations do not deny the existence of physical or psychological suffering resulting from the activities carried out by people, but seek ways to prevent conditions that put the health and integrity of individuals at risk. (BOEHS & SILVA, 2018).

According to Maio (2016), given the importance that work currently occupies in people’s lives, it must be a source of happiness. The construction of happiness in organizations begins when all individuals can use their strengths and virtues on a daily basis, develop teamwork seeking to achieve a greater objective and being able to use their skills to overcome challenges, proposing new measures or ways of working. For this to occur, it is necessary that the organization, through small actions, gradually develop a positive organizational culture that also permeates its mission, vision and values. (Maio, 2016).

Mendonça et al. (2014, p. 173) reiterate that employment conditions and work practice affect human beings in different ways, resulting in their progress and development; therefore, job satisfaction “constitutes one of the important domains for a healthy life”.

For employees to feel good in organizations it is necessary that they are valued and recognized. Companies that promote a positive organizational climate allow feelings of job satisfaction to emerge and, consequently, employees become committed and more creative. (Maio, 2016). For this to occur, Perez, Cobra and collaborators (2017, p. 39) emphasize that organizational culture is composed of “practices, symbols, habits, behaviors, ethical and moral values, in addition to principles, beliefs, internal and external policies, systems, jargon and organizational climate”. This culture, in turn, “influences all members of this organization with guidelines and assumptions to guide their behaviors and mindsets” (PEREZ, COBRA & COLLABORATORS, 2017, p. 39).

According to Maio (2016), companies need to ensure adequate working conditions for their employees, as described by Zocchio (2002) and Chiavenato (2014). Although it is essential to remunerate people who dedicate themselves to work activities, this alone is not enough (CHIAVENATO, 2014; MAIO, 2016; OLIVEIRA, 2017). In the conception of Maio (2016), in addition to the remuneration and benefits being fair, the challenges of the activities need to be in accordance with the subject’s abilities, referring to the flow logic. Management/leadership must also encourage the participation of individuals and the group relationship must be friendly, with well-being at work as a major premise (MAIO, 2016). This way, companies need to create conditions where the institution’s culture, structure, processes, mission, vision and values allow and encourage the expression of practices that contribute to the promotion of health and quality of life of the employee (MAIO, 2016).

This way, it is observed that Positive Psychology contributes to the development and strengthening of organizational culture by acting “on the potential of people and

cultivating the best of each individual, making the organization stronger and more competitive for the market” (CERVINO, 2019, p. 11). Thus, it offers the psychologist who works in organizations a form of action to avoid accidents at work, and he must pay attention to promoting a healthy and happy environment.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

It found that work accidents have always existed and have social repercussions (SILVA, 2015; ZOCCHIO, 2002). Statistical data on work accidents are worrying and the causes are associated with various factors, such as personal aspects of individuals, motivation, ability and physical structure of the workplace (FREITAS, 1974; ZOCCHIO, 2002; MARTINS, ANTONIOLLI, BARTEL et. al., 2015; CHIAVENATO, 2014).

Success in accident prevention actions is associated with a broad view of the various associated variables. Initiatives such as developing a good interpersonal relationship between members of the organization, studying the history of accidents looking for strategies to reduce situations that put the worker's health at risk, simultaneous training developed jointly between safety, medicine and psychology are necessary (ZOCCHIO, 2002).

It is observed that the activities of prevention, instruction and inspection, for the most part, are in charge of the security sector. Although prevention actions are necessary and effectively contribute to the reduction of accidents, it is necessary to go further, that is, given the centrality that work occupies in people's lives, it must be gratifying, producing happiness and well-being for people. individuals (ACHOR, 2012; MAIO, 2016). It is noteworthy that the work places man in the world, contributing to the development of his identity (OLIVEIRA, 2017).

Therefore, the discussions of Positive Psychology are promising for the development of actions to promote the health of the employee with a view to preventing accidents at work. Although studies in Positive Psychology applied to the organizational and work context are recent, this is not a limiting factor for the psychologist's performance from the assumptions of this area. The psychologist will be able to create conditions to promote a friendly relational climate, seeking to build a healthy and happy environment, aligned with the interests of the company, with the objective of promoting health and quality of life for employees. It must also be considered that happiness in organizations is not static, that is, it is built and rebuilt as time evolves (BOEHS & SILVA, 2017).

In general, within the limits of the analysis carried out, it can be said that this work opens the field for more research in the area, since there are few studies in the Brazilian literature involving Psychology, especially Positive Psychology, and work accidents. It is suggested that empirical studies be carried out to confirm or refute the findings described throughout this production, as well as to broaden the understanding of Psychology in the context of the prevention of work accidents.

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