

## STANDARDS, KNOWLEDGE AND VALUES IN THE MANAGEMENT OF THE ACTIVITY OF FIRST AIDISTS

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**Abstract:** The work activity of rescuers of the Military Fire Department is analyzed through the debate of norms and values deriving from urgent and mobile emergency care. The data collected in dialogic interviews showed the following results: professional choice related to the desire to help others, interest in the military life and desire to be a firefighter; divergence between prescribing and carrying out the work, attribution of the work of saving lives, revealed through immeasurable values, such as life, health and solidarity. Other studies addressing the topic are suggested, privileging group discussion techniques on work.

**Keywords:** Firefighter, Work Activity, Management, Health; Values.

## INTRODUCTION

To understand the way of rescuers-firefighters work is particularly important, because, in their professional action in society, in which they are summoned to save lives, they are exposed to the risk of accidents, contact with injured people, companions and family members, in addition, of course, the constant fight to ensure life in urgent and emergency care. All this in the midst of a military discipline that permeates his actions. Even so, they face death and feel powerless when they are unable to rescue the people in their care alive.

In this study, we investigated the management of the work activity of the first responders of the Fire Department of a city in the state of Paraíba, from the previous norms and the debates of values encouraged in the work, aiming to understand the work of the lifeguard professionals. Thus, by taking a multifaceted look at the activity of these professionals in mobile emergency transport - which imposes on them a set of work rules and, at the same time, a complex level of responsibilities to deal with it - we seek to mine subsidies that feed initiatives both by

public health agencies and society in general, in order to contribute to the provision of a quality service.

To understand this problem, centered on the work activity of firefighters, we were guided by theoretical choices that incorporated the dimension of knowledge and experiences lived in the work of these professionals. To this end, we chose two theoretical perspectives to carry out this research: Activity Ergonomics and Ergology. The first calls into question the major emphasis of Taylorism: the task done by man in an automated way. For Ergonomics, the prescribed work is the way it must be performed: the way to use tools and machines, the time allotted for each operation, the operating modes and the rules to be respected. Real work, on the other hand, is expressed in terms of performances performed or not against the quantitative and qualitative objectives imposed on the prescription, as well as actions or operating modes through the prescribed procedures (DARSES; MONTMOLLIN, 2006).

Ergology proposes a philosophical approach whose main objective is to study human work in all its dimensions, understanding it as a human activity, which is always crossed by choices and renormalizations to be debated in a world of values (SCHWARTZ, 2004), marked both by immeasurable interests in the order of good living, that is, what is health, solidarity and justice (SCHWARTZ, 2000b), expressed in the nature of the activity, which is to save lives, and in the order of the market, accumulation, quantification and results (SCHWARTZ, 2004), expressed in this activity under the aegis of reducing resources, reducing wages, among others.

The article aims to investigate the management of the work activity of the first responders of the Fire Department of a city in the state of Paraíba, through the antecedent norms and the debates of values generated

in the work, aiming to understand how the professionals, entitled lifeguards, experience daily work in the city.

## METHODOLOGY

This is a research with a qualitative approach, carried out with professional rescuers of a Military Fire Department, proceeded by dialogic interviews under the epistemological orientation of Ergology and Ergonomics of Activity. The field study had the participation of ten rescuers from the Military Fire Department who work in public safety in a city in the mesoregion of the Wild region of Paraíba. Nine of them are male and one female. Of these, six are married and four are single, aged between 22 and 34 years. The level of education varies: five have completed higher education, three have incomplete higher education, and two have completed secondary education.

To carry out the research we were authorized by the Research Ethics Committee of the Universidade Estadual da Paraíba with protocol number 0106.0.133.000-12 and we kept in touch with the general coordinator of the Fire Department, where we obtained authorization to start the field study in organ. With the express consent of the rescuers, the interviews were recorded and later transcribed in full.

An interview script was used that considered the condensation of different situations of utterances produced by everyday conversations about work, rejecting the point of view that they only recognize the role of a mere tool that allows the interviewer to access to the interviewee's "truth" (ROCHA, DAHER; SANTANNA, 2004, p. 169).

The data analysis, operated through the data extracted from the research, was inspired by the perspective of Minayo (1993): the first moment of the analysis was destined to the organization of the materials produced

in the dialogues carried out. Then, we made maps of the speeches of each interviewee, aiming to start the process of collecting and systematizing the data reported by the rescuers participating in the research. To maintain the anonymity of rescuers, we adopted the use of the capital letter E (interviewee), followed by an increasing number, according to the order in which each interview was performed.

## RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Considering the rescuers' reports, during the interviews, the results were grouped into four thematic axes, as will be presented below.

### THE PROCESS OF CHOOSING THE MILITARY FIREMAN PROFESSION

The choice of a profession is pulverized by a variety of reasons that permeate personal and social desires and values. It is a moment challenged by the desire and need to implement a plan, the result of a decision to be lived at work. What would have called the rescuers' attention to this occupation? According to their reports, we find some placements:

First of all, it's an option, being a firefighter is that boy's dream [emphasis added], you understand? And the option of being a rescuer is [...] I always liked the health area [emphasis added], right? Even because I was doing physical education and already had a certain experience in the health area. [E1]

Boy, like this: I always, always, always found it very beautiful [emphasis added], you know? this, this part of saving life and such. For me, I see it as a strong point, right? Power is saving lives and as a rescuer mainly. [E3]

Well, I chose to work in the fire department since, like, I always liked to help people [emphasis added] and, in this part, as a rescuer, which is the part that I most identify with, I also do... nursing technician course because you are in the area. [E7]

The most common reasons seem to be related to the desire to help other people, translated by rescuers in dreams and admiration for the profession. Using the ergological perspective, the statements “helping people”, “giving help” and “saving lives”, attributed to the process of choosing these professionals, take into account the dimension of values, especially the common good, solidarity, health and of life. Such values, as pointed out by Schwartz and Durrie (2010), in their origin, are not quantifiable. Therefore, salary and job stability, taken as a measurable value, do not account for risk and affective mobilization in the work of saving lives, even though they are considered complementary aspects to incommensurable values.

### **WORK OF FIRST AIDISTS: THE SLIP BETWEEN THE PRESCRIBED AND THE REAL**

Explaining their role, the rescuers describe the procedures that precede the calls for urgent and emergency care: shift change, vehicle inspection, civic ritual that includes the hierarchy of codes issued by the corporation through sound signals that summon them to occurrences. As Brito (2006) points out, it is notable that such components of the prescription that the Fire Brigade organization specifies formally, orally or in writing, through instructions and regulations, refer to rules and objectives set by the organization and to the minimum conditions of job. The existence of previous components is part of any work situation (DARSES; MONTMOLLIN, 2006), but they gain broader contours in this activity, when they are added to other components not necessarily expressed, but always present, such as the technical knowledge that guides the work. do and the imposition of always doing everything as quickly as possible.

On the other hand, despite the disciplinary efforts around the conformation of this

activity, the way of working of rescuers differs from Taylorist principles, in particular with regard to surveillance and direct control of the task and the detailed and optimized description of behaviors. On the other hand, there are still anticipations and more or less previous models of job specifications, which seek, in one way or another, to adapt, even in an insufficient way, the prescribed work in relation to the real one. When asked to talk about the work activity, the rescuers took more time to explain aspects of waiting for events, with regard to moments of rest and alertness:

A day at work for me is like this: it's gratifying, we come here, I personally have been asking that nothing happens. Because I know that when there is an incident, someone is going to be suffering, not just that person, but many people will suffer together: family members, when a person has an accident, everyone's routine changes, so I ask that, I leave the house, I pray to God that no occurrences happen, but when they cry [emphasis added] the occurrence has to come out with the will to solve it, right? [E2]

In quotes, from time to time, we will only leave here if there is an occurrence, because our service is barracked [emphasis added]. So, if there is an occurrence, we leave, if not, we don't leave, then it is very relative, there are days when there is a lot, there are days when nothing happens. [E5]

Given the speech clippings that denote the prescribed work and the real work, this distinction is not always clear, it can be analyzed in its dialogical aspect, since the act of communicating (SCHWARTZ, 2000b) means, in the foreground, to reconstruct with the interlocutors, in a partial way, the meaning attributed to the words. Also according to Schwartz (2000a), the two words, respectively “quarterado” and “brada”, in what refers to the language about work, express what anticipates the experience, as well as what goes beyond

it. On the one hand, it signals a particularity of the work that keeps rescuers on hold for incident calls; on the other hand, and as a result of this wait, the rescuers must pay attention to the activation of the sound signals (screams). In E2's speech, the affective element that permeates the rescuer's activity appears.

### **TO SAVE LIVES, HELPING PEOPLE: THE VALUES DEBATE**

The attribution of saving lives, mentioned by the interviewees, is considered fundamental in the profession of rescuer of the Fire Department. However, this ideal is confronted in real work in urgent and emergency intervention situations, making its implementation less immediate than might be expected. The accounts that follow show how the relationship between work, its value and its effects are not necessarily well reconciled, even when it comes to successful care. In situations where lives are at stake, especially the lives of children, such relationships are intensified in order to mobilize workers beyond their capacities for psychological elaboration:

This fact that was very striking in my life, this child, I spent a lot of time with that boy's face looking at me, you understand? Doing the procedure and he looking at me like that is (...) it was bad because I have a daughter in his age group, when I looked at my daughter every time I got emotional. My fear was the following: having this happened to her, [...] That was pretty bad, right? Not today, I'll tell you here and stuff, I worked on it. I still get emotional, right? [E1]

A newborn in the dump where the car got stuck and we had difficulty, and when we arrived at the place the child was already... how do I say? It was crowning, right? On the mother's lap, and together with the garrison we did all the work and the removal of these people from the place of difficult access, dangerous, it was a dump, it was not a house next to the dump, it was a house in the center of the dump! So we ran the risk

of cutting ourselves, puncturing ourselves, getting hurt, and also hurting those people, right? [E2]

In the course of the speeches above, we observed the efforts of rescuers to ensure a good effectiveness of the work, since they mobilize immeasurable values, such as health, life and solidarity (SCHWARTZ, 2000b; SCHWARTZ; DURRIVE, 2010). Such demands are not only imposed by the tasks: they are also self-demands that are sustained, for example, in their personal dreams prior to entering the profession. However, the effects of such a debate lasting over time give indications that these requirements may be greater than the ability of some to adequately elaborate it. Especially when they are not able to carry out only a partnership relationship with users, co-production of the service, but when they get involved with them in order to project personal situations on users that produce a kind of self-imposed over-implication (LOURAU, 2004), preventing them from they take ownership of the lived experiences in a more cognitive way, making them less likely to compose the patrimony of worked and reworked knowledge.

If the debates between work and values often lead to satisfactory decisions for the resolution of work, we see that the world of values in which such activity clashes can involve more personal values, such as the protection of one's own child, which emerge in through the activity, making it particularly difficult. In this sense, the perception that you are doing a good job does not necessarily require you to do the most difficult work. Perhaps because of the fact that helping someone incurs less risk of self-imposition of over-implication, without losing the possibility that even in simple occurrences, partnership and recognition on the part of users can be obtained. In this sense, the clash with values, even if positive, is not, due to its

positivity, merely formal or easy for workers to read. In other words: the work of rescuing/saving lives, crossed by norms that precede the occurrences, is situated in a field full of variability, of requirements that escape any prescription.

including the hierarchical structure of the corporation, particularly when this hierarchy makes it difficult or prevents a debate on the work standards of these professionals.

## CONCLUSIONS

In this study, we noticed a variation in the expectations placed on the professional choice. The reasons reported by the interviewees before becoming firefighters-rescuers are confronted, in the concrete exercise of the work, by conflicts arising from the organization of work, notably by the hierarchical rigidity, which, among others, makes it impossible to emerge from the point of view of the activity as an important element. management practices of that organization. However, even in the face of injunctions issued by the corporation, rescuers identify with their profession, even when they claim better conditions for helping people in need of urgency and mobile emergency.

In another moment, we analyzed the industrious character of the worker through his ability to make deviations and create new work norms in face of the rules and objectives set by the corporation. The importance of language is highlighted, signaled by the words “quartelado” and “brada”, evoked by the rescuers as a dialect of access to the activity.

In general, we found that the attribution of saving lives, an indelible mark of the rescuers’ work, is revealed through noble values, such as life, health and solidarity. The way of acting, in the face of prescription mistakes and the variability faced at work, expresses a debate of norms called by values of what it represents to be/being a rescuer, with others, in the city, on a daily basis.

For this reason, we propose a space for conversation about work and a training/development program for this team of workers,

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