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THE INCLUSION OF AUTISTICS IN THE JOB MARKET

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Abstract: The text presents a comprehensive analysis of the inclusion of autistic people in the job market, highlighting its evolution and challenges. Initially, the change in policies and social perceptions in relation to people with disabilities is highlighted, allowing their professional insertion. Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is contextualized in the DSM, addressing socio-emotional and communicative deficits. The research adopted an exploratory and qualitative approach, based on literary analysis with stages defined by Mendes et al. This provided a broad view of inclusion issues, identifying challenges such as social camouflage and difficulties in communication and work organization. The role of employers in inclusion stands out, emphasizing the importance of knowing individual needs and implementing adaptations in the work environment. The analysis of the results shows progress, but there are still challenges to overcome for effective and equal inclusion, suggesting measures such as professional preparation and incentives for hiring. It is concluded that a joint effort by society, companies and institutions is essential to remove barriers, promote awareness and create inclusive and diverse environments. This approach not only benefits autistic people, but also enriches companies and strengthens society, promoting equal opportunities and valuing diversity.

Keywords: Inclusion, Autism Spectrum Disorder, Work, Management.

INTRODUCTION

The job market has always been developed with a focus on serving people considered healthy and with full potential for work, whether with an intellectual or physical profile. Those who did not fit these characteristics were doomed to live under the custody of relatives or the State, causing great frustration on the part of the person and excessive

spending by family members or the State. With the most advanced research into the different types of disabilities or lack of health, as they were seen, it was possible to determine different treatments and ways of educating these people and having a development performance considered commendable. This, combined with technological development, allowed these people to enter the job market and raised the question of whether companies and people must adapt to receive people with the most diverse disabilities into work environments to better include them socially and professionally.

Regardless of the size of the company, it is likely that there is a position with a profile that is compatible with that of an autistic person, for example, the focus of this research. However, in some organizations, job vacancies intended for people with disabilities (PWD) end up being occupied in a way that does not serve autistic people in the job market. This happens because many managers are still unaware of the strengths of hiring someone within this spectrum.

Currently, we see some events, such as Meetings, Symposiums, Congresses, among others, focused on the inclusion of people on the autistic spectrum and what adaptation needs to be made to welcome them well, but their contribution to increasing vacancies is still insignificant. with this profile.

This article addresses the topic of inclusion of autistic individuals in the job market, considering the relevance of this topic in the current context. The labor inclusion of people with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a crucial aspect for promoting equality and maximizing the potential of these individuals.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders – DSM aims to outline psychiatric diagnoses, was prepared and published by the American Psychiatric Association (APA) and is used throughout the world by psychiatric doctors and also psychologists. According to DSM IV, Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is part of the group of diagnoses related to neurodevelopmental disorders (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

Deficits on the autism spectrum include difficulties in socioemotional reciprocity, such as problems initiating or maintaining conversations and sharing interests and emotions, deficits in nonverbal communicative behaviors, such as abnormalities in eye contact and body language, and difficulties in developing relationships, such as making friends. and adjust to different social contexts. These symptoms vary in severity according to each person affected, the severity is determined by the levels of deficits in social communication and restricted and repetitive behavior patterns, which is why the term “spectrum” is used as it includes a wide range of symptoms, abilities and severity levels, ranging from mild to severe. (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

The adult phase of people with Autism requires special consideration with regard to their social integration, through opportunities that involve higher education and entry into the job market. Some authors emphasize that this period can be characterized by social isolation (Talarico; Pereira & Goyos, 2019; Zanon; Backes & Bosa, 2017), but advances in therapies and the provision of support services make it possible to include this group in the healthcare market. work. Promoting a better quality of life and allowing people with ASD to demonstrate and improve the skills they already have (Talarico; Pereira & Goyos, 2019). It must be

considered that the more severe spectrum may make it difficult or even impossible to enter the job market given the level of neurological and cognitive impairment.

Faced with the considerable challenges related to the integration of this segment into society and the professional environment, the question arises about the factors that research, both national and international, have highlighted as facilitating and hindering elements for the access and maintenance of people with Spectrum Disorder Autistic (ASD) in the job market.

Access to treatment can occur through public equipment via the Unified Health System - SUS, which offers occupational therapies and specialized care services for autistic people through CAPSi (Center for Psychosocial Care for Children and Youth) and CAPS II (Center for Psychosocial Care Adult). Assessments are carried out by a team made up of a psychiatrist, neurologist, psychologist, social worker, among other professionals. This assessment must be able to indicate the spectrum that the patient is in so that the therapeutic plan is assertive. Their role is to establish a Unique Therapeutic Plan (PTS). PTS is a set of therapeutic proposals with the aim of promoting the behavioral development and well-being of each patient.

THE INSERTION OF AUTISTIC PEOPLE IN THE BRAZILIAN JOB MARKET

Before analyzing the reality within organizations and checking if there are any flaws, it is necessary to identify what really happens to people with autism, as it is a deficit that can vary from person to person.

In Brazil, around 2 million people (1% of the population) are in this condition, according to figures from the Ministry of Health. According to the UN (apud Saraiva, 2021), only 20% of autistic people are employed.

According to the Aurélio dictionary (2010), the term “inclusion” refers to the act or effect of including, understanding and inserting. When associated with the adjective “social”, it refers to processes that involve the integration of people or groups previously excluded or neglected in societal dynamics, aiming to fully incorporate them into these contexts.

Social inclusion goes beyond mere physical presence and ensures that all members of a society are actively understood and actively participate in social interactions, regardless of their differences. This is not only enabling participation, but also recognizing and valuing individual contributions, creating a truly inclusive environment.

Therefore, social inclusion involves removing prejudices and barriers that can marginalize specific groups. These processes can include physical accessibility and support equal opportunities across sectors such as education, work and leisure. Inclusion is not limited to the simple fact that someone is accepted; it also requires everyone to be actively and meaningfully involved in the construction and evolution of society.

To create more accessible and enriching work environments, it is essential to understand how autistic individuals can be included in the workplace. Inclusion is the process of total and active integration of all members, regardless of their differences, in various social contexts, according to Santos and Prata (2018). In this context, the objective is to find effective practices that have a positive impact on the professional development of autistic people.

Approaches to inclusion include workplace changes and specific training programs. Authors such as Ribeiro et al. (2021) state that training that aims to raise awareness of colleagues and managers about the needs and possible needs of autistic people helps to improve organizational culture.

As stated by Oliveira e Silva (2022), to make the work environment more accessible, it is necessary to implement specific measures, such as flexible working hours and adaptations to the routine. These approaches are not only helpful for autistic people, but also help create more diverse and innovative workplaces.

In short, inclusion is a constant effort to build a fairer society. To ensure that everyone has the opportunity to fully contribute and benefit from social, academic and professional interactions, it is necessary to raise awareness, promote inclusive policies and value diversity in all aspects of life.

SOCIAL CAMOUFLAGE

The term “social camouflage” refers to a set of conscious or unconscious strategies, explicitly learned or implicitly developed by the individual with ASD, which aims to “mask” behaviors characteristic of the autism spectrum, with the intention of adapting and meeting the expectations of others. more diverse social contexts (Hull et al., 2020).

Social camouflage in the context of ASD requires effort from both the autistic individual and their co-workers, generating emotional and physical exhaustion in both. It is interesting to note that, while it is an adaptive tool, it also tends to lead to negative experiences of anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, emotional exhaustion, suicidal thoughts, burnout, etc.

With compromised mental health, socialization is impaired in different spheres, such as the family, educational, work, emotional and social environment (Bargiela; Steward; Mandy, 2016).

Social camouflage is, therefore, relatively common in the daily lives of people with autism, especially among women and those on the level 1 spectrum, with implications for their diagnoses (Kerches, 2022).

DIFFERENCES IN COMMUNICATION

Autistic people have difficulty understanding indirect or unclear messages. However, when responding, they will most likely say exactly what is needed, using direct language. They may have difficulty understanding body language, such as posture, gestures, facial expressions and tone of voice, for example.

It is possible to notice, in practice, that one of the biggest causes of suffering in adults with autism is not knowing how to identify their needs and express their messages in an assertive and functional way. As a consequence, they deal with intense psychological stress trying to adapt to social and environmental demands, with the aim of being accepted and not judged for their behaviors and needs.

Mösken (2022, p. 42 and 43) reports that:

... He used to judge people by what he valued most, their logical ability. I was quite proud [...] until I faced many difficulties in higher education. Considering myself a failure in the only tribute I truly valued, intelligence, I began to see myself as trash. When I finally got a job, I was afraid they would send me away at any moment. [...] When I received my first promotion, after just six months of work, [...] the feeling of being a fraud at work remained. Until one day I responded to a colleague and that person explained to me what I was suffering.

In this testimony, the need to welcome autistic employees are noted. Because, if an employee is well received and if the organization demonstrates that they are part of the team, trust between the parties improves and, consequently, so does communication within the company (Machado Neto, 2003, p. 22).

DIFFERENCES IN ORGANIZATION AND PLANNING

Once an autistic employee learns a type of process, it may be more difficult to apply a change to that routine. When trying to teach too many tasks at once, it can make the person anxious and hinder work efficiency. More time may be needed.

According to Nitzan & Schreuer (2018), there are difficulties in overcoming the lack of knowledge about the characteristics of ASD and in removing existing barriers in the work environment and in implementing monitoring for adults with ASD, and in this case, there is a need to employer actions in response to employee needs and motivations to learn solutions.

THE ROLE OF EMPLOYERS IN INCLUSION

Managing a company and a strong team of employees involves many responsibilities. But, in addition to complying with labor laws and union determinations, the employer can take the lead in some situations.

When it comes to management practices for professionals with ASD, it must be taken into consideration, that each person is different and, as such, several adaptations may be necessary both in practices and in the workplace. According to Bidart and Santos (2021), it is important for the company to know the specific needs and individual characteristics of employees with ASD. The authors also emphasize that it is essential to make adaptations in the work environment.

Despite all the awareness surrounding management practices for professionals with ASD, Carneiro (2012) points out that the challenges faced by people with intellectual disabilities are different from those faced by people with physical disabilities, since people with intellectual disabilities may need more attention and support to understand their

role. There is still the challenge of a series of prejudices and stereotypes, as Oliveira (2013) points out, for the author, this is due to the absence of effective approaches to promote accessibility and break down attitudinal barriers.

INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

Internal communication (...) would be a planned sector, with well-defined objectives, to enable all possible interaction between the organization and its employees, using institutional communication tools and even marketing communication. (...) Therefore, internal communication occurs in parallel with the normal circulation of communication that permeates all sectors of the organization, allowing its full functioning. [It is also] a strategic tool for making the interests of employees and the company compatible, through encouraging dialogue, the exchange of information and experiences and participation at all levels (Kunsch, 2003, p. 154).

According to Bueno (2009), although they belong to the same organization, people have communication habits in tune with their life experience and knowledge of the world. Therefore, there are significant differences between the people who participate in the internal environment of a company. Therefore, when proposing strategies to interact with these people, it is necessary to keep this heterogeneity in mind, creating specific relationship channels with language, format and content appropriate to each clientele.

METHODOLOGY

This study is exploratory and qualitative research. This type of study is based on its scientific rigor and is characterized as an analysis of the literature, which allows a synthesis of the topic (Crossetti, 2012; Mendes et al., 2008).

Regarding the methodological procedures of the research, the procedures defined by Mendes et al. (2008): decision on the research topic, objectives, hypothesis and guiding question; search for articles in the database, extraction of information and, finally, analysis and discussion of the results.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

When it comes to the topic of the job market for professionals with some type of disability, it is possible to see that there is still a lot of prejudice and discrimination towards these people. According to the Quota Law (art. 93 of Law Number 8,213, of July 24, 1991), the proportions for employing people with disabilities vary according to the number of employees. In companies with 100 to 200 employees, the reserve is 2%; from 201 to 500, 3%; from 501 to 1,000, 4%. Companies with more than 1,000 employees must reserve 5% of vacancies for this group. This law appears to be a target of prejudice, as there are professionals who interpret it as an advantage for people with disabilities (Basto and Cepellos, 2023).

Regarding the inclusion of autistic people in the job market, the Berenice Piana Law established that it is the right of people with ASD to have access to employment possibilities, which is necessary for their inclusion in the job market (Brasil, 2023).

From a very early age, motor performance is fundamental to work and communication skills, and it is possible to observe how much this deficiency affects the social life of autistic people. Thus, the difficulty in

motor performance generates social losses in individuals with ASD, preventing them from participating spontaneously in organizational activities.

Therefore, it is essential that the organizational team aligns itself with all the necessary guidelines so that an employee with ASD can receive adequate support and offer better performance in the company.

Leopoldino and Coelho (2017) understand that, in order to implement the inclusive process for people with ASD and alleviate the barriers encountered, it is necessary to list four dimensions of public policies, which are important to be implemented, such as: preparation for professional performance, encouragement hiring, promoting scientific production, and acquiring accurate information on the issue. For this group, it is possible to perceive skills in performing repetitive functions and memorizing details.

Another very important issue is to check the level of autism and the type of employment that may relate to their abilities (Kaya et al., 2018) and Soeker (2020) suggests that a stronger support system in the work environment would be important. work, increasing knowledge about the characteristics of people with ASD among employers and co-workers.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Based on the text provided on the inclusion of autistic people in the job market, we can conclude that there are still significant challenges to be overcome to ensure effective and equal inclusion. Although there are advances in understanding the needs of autistic people and in the creation of inclusion initiatives, such as events and awareness programs, there are still barriers that limit these people's access to the professional environment.

Social camouflage, difficulties in communication and work organization are some of the challenges faced by autistic people in the workplace. These issues highlight the importance of inclusive policies and practices on the part of employers, who must strive to create adapted and welcoming work environments.

The results of the analysis reveal that the inclusion of autistic people in the job market is not just about meeting quotas or offering job opportunities. A deeper understanding of the individual needs of each autistic employee

is necessary and the establishment of concrete measures to ensure their full development and contribution in the professional environment.

Therefore, the effective inclusion of autistic people in the job market requires a joint effort by society, companies and government institutions to remove barriers, promote awareness and create a truly inclusive and diverse work environment. This approach not only benefits autistic people, but also enriches companies and strengthens society as a whole, promoting equal opportunities and valuing diversity.

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