

Quality Of Life At Work In The Perception Of Teachers Of A Public School In The Municipality Of Três Rios/Rj, Brazil

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Abstract: The present research aimed to analyze the perceptions that teachers of a Brazilian public school have about the theme quality of life at work. To this end, an exploratory research of qualitative approach was carried out with a sample composed of 15 high school teachers. Data collection involved the application of in-depth interviews with respondents, and the data were analyzed using the discourse analysis technique. As a result, it was found that perceptions of quality of life are associated with emotional, psychological and interpersonal factors, involving elements such as well-being, satisfaction, good relationship, fair pay, benefits and stability. However, teachers highlighted the existence of some factors that hinder the quality of life in the institution, such as students' bad behavior, extensive workload, inadequate infrastructure, difficulty in getting to work, lack of possibilities for advancement and poor remuneration. In this bias, the suggestions for improvements of the teachers encompassed measures around the main problems faced in the institution, which corroborates the need to promote a school environment favorable to well-being, engagement and development, considering not only tangible aspects, but also emotional support.

Keywords: Quality of Work Life (QWL); Well-being; Teachers.

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I. Introduction

Over the last decades, the theme of quality of work life (QWL) has been gaining more and more prominence in the academic and business fields, especially when applied to the educational sphere, considering the crucial role of teachers in the formation and development of future generations. Educators play a fundamental role in society, shaping minds and inspiring students to seek knowledge and personal improvement. Thus, ensuring an adequate quality of life at work for teachers becomes essential for the effectiveness of the educational process and for well-being in teaching work (ROCHA et al., 2022).

As Boas and Morin (2017) point out, the quality of life at work is a concept that encompasses the conditions, environment and characteristics of the work environment that affect the physical, psychological and social well-being of employees in an organization. Quality of work life is intrinsically linked to the level of employee satisfaction and motivation, directly reflecting on productivity and overall company performance. In other words, it refers to the perception that employees have about their work experience and how it impacts their lives in general.

However, the complexity of teaching in the contemporary scenario has posed significant challenges for teachers' quality of life at work. As Veiga et al. (2017) point out, the routine of educators is characterized by a series of challenges and demands that directly affect the quality of life at work. The overload of tasks, such as preparing classes, correcting tests and assignments, and extracurricular activities, consumes much of the teacher's time, often exceeding the limits of the stipulated working day. In addition, the lack of adequate resources and

infrastructure in educational institutions can compromise the quality of teachers' work, making the work environment less conducive to educational development and well-being.

In this scenario, the increasing pressure for academic results has been generating high levels of stress and anxiety, affecting the physical and emotional balance of teachers. As a consequence, teachers' mental health has been compromised, reflecting not only on productivity and motivation at work, but also in their personal lives. Emotional exhaustion, when excessive, can result in an increase in the rates of professional exhaustion, known as "burnout syndrome", leading to temporary or permanent withdrawal from work (LIMA; COUTINHO, 2020; DALCIN; CARLOTTO, 2017).

However, the wear and tear of teaching work can also have physical implications for teachers. Constant physical exertion, often associated with long hours of standing or poor posture during lessons, can lead to muscle and joint problems. In addition, psychological pressure and emotional stress resulting from educational responsibilities can manifest themselves through physical symptoms such as headaches, sleep disorders and changes in the immune system (JUNIOR; VIEIRA, 2018).

In the specific case of public schools in Brazil, the challenges faced by teachers in relation to quality of life at work are enhanced. Educators working in public schools often have to deal with large classes, scarce resources, lack of up-to-date teaching materials and, in some cases, lack of adequate support from school management. These adverse conditions can lead to greater physical and emotional exhaustion, making the search for a satisfactory quality of life at work even more challenging (PEREIRA, 2018).

Given this context, the present research aimed to analyze the perceptions of teachers from a Brazilian public school regarding quality of life at work. In this study, the main factors that influence the quality of life of these professionals were investigated, considering the challenges and demands faced in the current context of education. The results obtained are intended to contribute to a deeper understanding of this theme and can serve as a basis for the development of strategies and policies aimed at improving the work environment and the well-being of teachers.

II. Material And Methods

Regarding the methodology, this research was configured as exploratory type, since the intention was to analyze the perceptions that teachers of a Brazilian public school have in relation to the theme quality of life at work. By adopting the exploratory method, the research had the necessary flexibility to delve into the complex and multifaceted aspects in the school under study, which allowed a more comprehensive and flexible investigation, considering different perspectives and nuances present in the teachers' perceptions of the work environment.

Regarding the approach, this research had a qualitative orientation, which sought to understand and interpret the phenomena studied from the integrated perspective of the interviewees, corroborating what Medeiros (2012) suggests. Thus, teachers' perceptions, values, attitudes and beliefs were prioritized in order to capture the complexity and subjectivity involved in the teachers' experience at work. The qualitative approach allowed for a deeper and more meaningful exploration of the social, emotional and cultural aspects that influence teachers' perceptions of their work environment.

The sample consisted of 15 high school teachers from a public school that is located in the municipality of Três Rios, in the interior of the state of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The school in question is located in the city center and covers all primary education, ranging from early childhood education to high school. Respondents were selected through convenience sampling, which prioritizes ease of access to participants (MAROTTI et al., 2008). The choice of convenience sampling was made due to the availability of teachers to participate in the research at the time of data collection.

By adopting the integrated perspective of the subjects involved, the research valued the different voices and perspectives of the teachers, recognizing that their individual and collective experiences shape their perceptions of quality of life at work. Thus, it was possible to obtain a richer and more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics present in the school, contributing to a more complete and contextualized analysis of the beneficial and harmful factors existing in the organizational context.

As a research instrument, in-depth interviews were applied, where teachers were encouraged to share their experiences, emotions and views about the work environment. Participants' personal narratives provided insights into how institutional culture, leadership, interpersonal relationships and development opportunities influence their motivation, engagement and well-being in the educational context. Interviews were conducted individually with each teacher to ensure they felt comfortable sharing their perceptions openly and honestly.

The interviews were guided by a semi-structured questionnaire that contained open-ended questions, allowing teachers to freely express their opinions and experiences related to the school's organizational climate. The choice of the semi-structured questionnaire was made to ensure that the open-ended questions provided participants with the freedom to express their perceptions, feelings and experiences in a spontaneous way and not limited by pre-defined options. This enabled teachers to address issues they considered more relevant or to express

themselves in more detail, allowing for greater depth in the responses obtained, corroborating with what Boni and Quaresma (2005) recommend.

In addition, participant observations were conducted, which allowed for an immersion in the daily life of the school, experiencing the work environment and the interactions between teachers in their natural context. This approach made it possible to capture dynamics and behaviours that might not be perceived through the interviews alone, providing a more complete and contextualized view of the school's organizational climate.

In the data analysis process, the information collected in the interviews and questionnaires was transcribed, categorized and interpreted using discourse analysis techniques. The discourse analysis technique is characterized as a method based on understanding the subjects' speech (FIORIN, 2001). Thus, this technique made it possible to identify recurring themes, patterns and divergences in the teachers' responses, as well as to understand the relationships between the different elements of the organizational climate and their influences on the teachers' work. The conclusions and interpretations resulting from the data analysis were presented in a clear and well-founded manner, with direct reference to the teachers' voices and their perceptions of the work environment at the school.

III. Result

This topic presents the results and analysis of the data obtained, thus encompassing the profile of the interviewees, the perceptions about what it is to have quality of life at work, the harmful factors that affect the quality of life at school and, finally, the suggestions for improvements that could be made for a better quality of life in the workplace.

Profile of interviewees

After defining the objectives, the fieldwork began with the first phase of the interview, the purpose of which was to identify in detail the profile of the participating teachers. The results of this stage revealed that 80% of the interviewees were women, while 20% were men, indicating a female predominance among the sample, which represents an expressive portion of the teaching staff engaged in the research.

The age range of the respondents varied from 23 to 52 years, with the average age estimated at 34 years. Among the respondents, only two respondents reported being under 27 years old, which shows that most teachers have a more consolidated professional experience, with a significant time of performance in the high school of the school under study.

Regarding marital status, nine respondents stated that they were married, while three declared themselves single. In addition, two respondents mentioned being divorced, and one emphasized being widowed. In this case, it was observed that most of the women interviewed are married and have family responsibilities, such as raising children. These data show that the school under study has a teaching staff made up mostly of teachers with family responsibilities, which may have implications for the work context and availability for extracurricular activities.

Finally, the last question regarding the profile was about the teachers' time working at the school. The results showed that most of the teachers interviewed have been working at the educational institution for a significant period of time, with an estimated average of three years. This scenario is influenced by the public nature of the institution, in which educators tend to remain for longer periods, attributing this characteristic to the stability provided by the public tender.

Perceptions of what it means to have quality of life at work

Regarding the perceptions of teachers about the concept of quality of life at work, the results showed that the majority of respondents, totaling seven individuals, expressed that this quality is intrinsically linked to well-being, thus involving elements such as satisfaction, pleasure and happiness, as evidenced by the reports below. Having quality of life at work is having satisfaction in what we do. It is being happy and content with work activities (E2).

Quality of life at work for me is feeling good, both physically and psychologically (E7).

In my opinion, quality of life at work encompasses a sense of well-being, of being happy and fulfilled as a professional (E9).

It is observed that teachers value aspects that transcend the mere fulfillment of work obligations, seeking a rewarding and meaningful experience in the work environment. Satisfaction with their activities, pleasure in performing their duties, recognition for their efforts and contributions, and prioritization of well-being emerge as fundamental pillars in the understanding that these teachers have about a quality of life in the professional context.

Quality of life at work is related to personal satisfaction and the feeling of fulfillment with the activities performed. The idea of being happy and content with work tasks reflects the importance that teachers attach to the emotional aspect in the professional environment. The emphasis on well-being is another relevant point, since teachers associate quality of life at work with the feeling of feeling good in the environment in which they work. This well-being encompasses both the physical aspect, related to the physical and ergonomic conditions of the

environment, and the psychological aspect, involving emotional and mental aspects that directly influence engagement and productivity at work.

The perceptions of quality of life at work show that teachers value intangible aspects such as recognition for their efforts and contributions, the search for a rewarding work experience and the prioritization of well-being in the environment in which they work. Thus, quality of life at work for these professionals is the result of the intersection between personal satisfaction and a favorable work environment, involving emotional, psychological and physical elements.

In addition to the elements associated with well-being, four teachers emphasized that quality of life involves good interpersonal relationships. This perception highlights the relevance that these professionals attribute to healthy and collaborative coexistence with coworkers, students and other members of the school community, as shown in the following statements.

There is no work without human interaction. Therefore, I believe that quality of life at work involves having a good relationship with coworkers and students (E13).

It is living in a harmonious environment where there is mutual respect between all parties (E5).

For these teachers, having a good interpersonal relationship is key to creating a harmonious work environment where the exchange of knowledge, ideas and experiences is facilitated. The establishment of positive relationships between members of the teaching team can contribute significantly to the development of a friendlier and more motivating organizational climate. Moreover, good interpersonal relationships are also seen as a determining factor in building a culture of mutual support and encouragement, which is essential for facing the challenges and difficulties inherent in the teaching profession.

As people spend most of their time at work, quality of life in the professional environment is key to teachers' overall well-being. Good interpersonal relationships not only contribute to job satisfaction, but also positively impact teachers' productivity, commitment and motivation. When teachers have a harmonious work environment where there is mutual respect and a supportive culture, they feel more encouraged to share their ideas and experiences, collaborating more effectively. The exchange of knowledge among colleagues is enriching, resulting in an environment of continuous learning and improvement of pedagogical practices.

Thus, through a collaborative environment, teachers can feel more encouraged to share their experiences, seek help when needed and collaborate on joint projects, thus favoring the construction of a cohesive and engaged team. This emphasis on interpersonal relationships highlights that quality of life at work is not limited to individual physical and emotional conditions, but is also influenced by the dynamics of social and affective interactions within the work environment.

The other teachers cited various aspects, such as recognition, good remuneration, labor benefits and stability. This diversity in responses corroborates that the perception of quality of life at work is multifaceted and varies according to the individual needs, values and aspirations of each professional. Quality of work life cannot be reduced to a single dimension or isolated factor, as it is a comprehensive and complex concept that involves different aspects of professional life.

Main harmful factors affecting quality of life at work

Regarding the harmful factors that affect the quality of life at work, five teachers reported factors associated with students' bad behavior, such as disrespect, disinterest and interruptions during classes, as evidenced by the reports below.

The factor that most harms the organizational climate within the school is the lack of interest of the class in the lessons. They use cell phones, talk during my presentations and even talk. I draw their attention and this ends up generating wear and tear (E4).

I believe it is the disrespect of the students. Working at the secondary level in a public school requires patience. The organizational climate is greatly affected because of this (E7).

Teachers' reports indicate that students' bad behavior, represented by disrespect, disinterest and interruptions during classes, is a major factor that undermines the quality of life in the public school studied. These factors generate a challenging and demotivating environment for teachers, significantly affecting satisfaction and well-being in the work environment. Students' lack of interest in classes, demonstrated by the use of cell phones, conversations and lack of attention during presentations, makes the task of teaching and maintaining student engagement difficult.

Thus, it appears that teachers are facing difficulties in relation to quality of life at work, since one of the main factors cited as essential for this - good interpersonal relationships - is not being practiced effectively at school. Good interpersonal relationships are key to creating a positive working environment in which teachers feel valued, supported and respected. Healthy relationships between members of the educational community promote greater job satisfaction, facilitate conflict resolution and favor collaboration and the sharing of ideas and experiences between teachers and students, which is not the case for the teachers under study.

The absence of this good interpersonal relationship in the school in question is damaging teachers' quality of life. Lack of support and respect from students can lead to emotional exhaustion, professional disengagement and even reduced motivation to teach. This can result in a vicious circle, where low levels of quality of work life negatively affect the quality of teaching and, consequently, students' perception of the school.

This is because a negative work environment can lead to students losing interest in classes and school activities, resulting in a reduction in motivation and academic performance. These factors highlighted by teachers are indicative of possible challenges in the educational environment, which can affect both teachers and students. An unfavorable organizational climate can generate tensions and difficulties in classroom management, impairing the teacher-student relationship and the development of pedagogical activities.

The second harmful factor most cited by teachers was in relation to working hours, where four respondents cited elements such as: extensive workload, high demand for activities and difficulty in reconciling professional and personal life.

What hampers the quality of life is the extensive workload. To make ends meet, I have to teach several classes. In addition to working at the public school, I have to give private lessons to handle everything (E14).

Without a doubt, it is the high demand of activities. As teachers, we have to attend meetings, prepare classes, correct tests. This wears us down a lot, as we often have to give up our leisure time to cope (E9).

The data analysis reveals that extensive working hours are a significant factor undermining teachers' quality of life. Teachers' statements emphasize that the extensive workload is a source of worry and stress. The need to teach multiple classes to secure the income needed to support themselves financially creates a work overload, where teachers are forced to take on multiple responsibilities, both in public school and in private lessons. This accumulation of tasks contributes to the physical and emotional exhaustion of teachers, directly impacting their quality of life.

The high demand of activities is also mentioned as a detrimental factor, as teachers need to dedicate time to plan lessons, correct tests and assignments, attend meetings, among other responsibilities inherent to the profession. These additional demands create pressure and make it challenging to find a balance between professional obligations and personal life. Often, teachers feel forced to sacrifice leisure time and family life in order to cope with the demands of work.

This analysis underscores the importance of addressing the issues related to teachers' working hours, especially the extensive workload and high demand for activities. Measures should be taken to promote a healthier and more balanced working environment that allows teachers to fulfill their professional responsibilities without compromising their personal quality of life.

It is also worth mentioning that three teachers highlighted that the main harmful factor is associated with inadequate work infrastructure, such as poor air conditioning, precarious staff, problems in facilities, poor equipment, old furniture and dirty bathrooms. The statements below show the teachers' reports.

The infrastructure of the school is precarious. We have no air conditioning and the facilities are in trouble. I have to teach in a hot environment to more than 30 students in one room (E8).

What wears me out about the school is the situation it is in. The bathrooms are dirty, the chairs are bad and the boards are precarious. There is no way to give a good class like this (E1).

The physical environment really hinders my quality of life. It seems that we are abandoned here, there has been no reform for a long time (E10).

Based on the data presented by the teachers, it is evident that inadequate infrastructure is a significant problem in the school in question. Three teachers reported that this issue is the main harmful factor that directly affects the work environment and, consequently, the quality of life. The precarious state of the infrastructure involves several aspects, including the lack of adequate air conditioning, represented by the absence of air conditioning in overcrowded classrooms, which makes the environment hot and uncomfortable for teaching and learning. In addition, the hygiene of toilets is mentioned as a problem. Dirty toilets can create an unpleasant environment for everyone involved in the school and impact the students' experience during school time.

It was also noted that problems with the school facilities are also mentioned, ranging from structural issues to electrical and plumbing problems. The situation of school furniture is also a point of concern. Teachers report that the chairs are in poor condition and the boards are precarious, which can hinder the realization of effective classes. Another relevant issue is the lack of investment in school improvements and renovations, raised by one of the teachers. The apparently abandoned environment and the absence of renovations for a long period of time can negatively affect teachers' motivation and sense of belonging to the institution.

Given these issues, it is evident that inadequate infrastructure is a significant factor that directly affects the school environment and the well-being of the professionals and students involved. Investing in infrastructure improvements is crucial to provide an adequate environment for teaching and learning, improve the quality of life of teachers and students and, consequently, promote an educational environment more conducive to academic and personal development.

It should also be considered that three teachers cited harmful factors such as: difficulty in traveling to school due to the distance from home, lack of possibility of career advancement and poor remuneration. The difficulties of commuting, lack of growth prospects and low pay can result in an unfavorable environment for the teaching profession, harming both teachers and the quality of education offered to students.

Suggested improvements for a better quality of life at work

In view of the identification of harmful factors, we inquired about suggestions for improvements that could be made at the school to improve the quality of life at work. In response, it was observed that most respondents emphasized suggestions for improvements linked to the main problems faced in the institution. In this case, seven teachers suggested greater recognition and appreciation, four pointed out the decrease in the number of students per class, two pointed out the reforms in the school environment and two highlighted the implementation of leisure programs in schools.

Regarding the main suggestion for improvement cited, it was possible to see that most teachers highlighted the need for greater recognition and appreciation, both financially and professionally. This suggests that teachers consider it essential to receive a fair salary and to be valued for their work, both in terms of remuneration and professional recognition.

What would help a lot is better pay. The work of a teacher is tiring and wears out a lot. So the financial reward should be proportional to all the work we have (E3).

We teachers are very undervalued, and this has a reflection on our salary. So the first step is to start recognizing the class and promoting it. Being a teacher is such a noble profession, but in Brazil it is still undervalued (E11).

Based on the reports, it is observed that educators perceive that their efforts and contributions are not being properly recognized and appreciated, leading to a desire for significant changes in this scenario. The analysis of the results suggests that enhancing the quality of life in teaching work requires measures that go beyond salary improvements. While fairer remuneration is considered essential, participants also point to a profound lack of professional recognition and appreciation. To achieve a substantial improvement, it is necessary to promote a cultural change that reaffirms the importance of teachers in education and in society as a whole. This process may involve awareness campaigns, recognition programs and actions that transform the perception and appreciation of the teaching career, rescuing its prominent position and positive influence on the formation of future generations.

In addition to the concern about recognizing and valuing teachers, another crucial point highlighted by participants was the suggestion to decrease the number of students per class. This recommendation suggests a direct link between class size and the behavioral challenges faced in the classroom, such as excessive talking and inappropriate behavior on the part of students. The presence of large numbers of students results in difficulties in maintaining order and attention, leading to situations where some students become distracted or behave in an unruly manner. The underlying idea is that smaller class sizes would allow for more individualized interaction and more effective control of the classroom environment, which minimizes behaviour problems and improves the focus on education.

Decreasing the amount of students per class would be one of the suggestions. As the class is very full, it is difficult to teach and deal with several students. The wear and tear would certainly be minimized (E7).

Thus, the association between class size, student behavior and quality of learning is important. A class with fewer students can provide a more conducive environment for active participation, teacher-student interaction and more dynamic activities. This can result in better student engagement, reduced interruptions and disruptive behavior, and consequently a more productive and effective learning environment.

Suggestions for improving the school's infrastructure should also be emphasized. Teachers' perception of the importance of the physical environment goes beyond the classroom walls, transcending the simple structural aspect. Teachers understand that the quality of the space in which teaching and learning occur is intrinsically linked to the well-being and quality of life of students and educators, as evidenced by the statements below.

They should improve the school environment. We teach in precarious conditions, and this greatly affects the quality of the class and, above all, our lives as teachers (E10).

The main suggestion would be around the infrastructure of the classrooms. It is necessary to have the minimum conditions in the environment so that we can work effectively (E1).

By highlighting the need for infrastructural improvements, teachers demonstrate a deep awareness of the effects that an inadequate environment can have on students' mental health, motivation and engagement. Well-designed, comfortable and safe environments can positively influence students' mood, providing a space where they feel valued and motivated to explore, learn and interact. The emphasis on infrastructural improvements reflects educators' understanding that teachers' quality of life also plays a crucial role in the educational process. A school environment that offers adequate working conditions, appropriate rest areas and functional facilities not only optimizes educators' performance, but also contributes to their job satisfaction and fulfilment.

Last but not least, it is necessary to emphasize the suggestions given for the implementation of leisure programs in schools. This recommendation underscores the importance of fostering a more balanced and healthy school environment that not only focuses on the academic aspect, but also recognizes the need for emotional and mental well-being of teachers and students. In every profession, moments of leisure are essential to recharge energies, reduce stress and maintain a healthy mental state. In the educational context of the teachers under study, the introduction of leisure programs can play a crucial role in creating an environment conducive to learning and personal growth, with direct implications on quality of life.

IV. Conclusion

Based on this exploratory qualitative research, it was possible to understand the perceptions of teachers from a Brazilian public school about quality of life at work. The predominance of women in the teaching staff, combined with consolidated experience and family responsibilities, highlights the importance of considering the different dimensions of teachers' professional and personal lives. It was found that quality of life at work is intrinsically linked to emotional, psychological and interpersonal factors, where recognition, satisfaction, well-being and a collaborative environment are fundamental elements for a rewarding professional experience.

The identification of harmful factors highlighted the negative influence of students' bad behavior, extensive workload and inadequate infrastructure. The challenge of dealing with disruptive behaviors, coupled with exhaustion caused by work overload and poor physical conditions of the work environment, compromises the quality of life and effectiveness of teaching performance. These issues are interconnected and reinforce the need for comprehensive approaches to improving working and teaching conditions. The suggestions for improvement presented by teachers point to the urgency of actions that recognize, value and support the teaching profession.

As a consequence, the desire for greater professional recognition, reduced class sizes, improved infrastructure and the implementation of leisure programs reflect the need to foster a school environment that is conducive to the well-being, engagement and full development of both teachers and students. These suggestions resonate with the importance of not only addressing tangible issues such as infrastructure and workload, but also considering intangible aspects such as recognition and emotional support.

In a broader context, teachers' perceptions of quality of work life highlight the need for a holistic approach to promoting healthy and productive educational environments. Therefore, meeting teachers' emotional, psychological and social needs is critical to ensuring quality teaching and an enriching professional experience. The implementation of measures that address both behavioral challenges in the classroom and the quality of infrastructure, coupled with ongoing efforts to recognize and value the teaching profession, is crucial to creating an environment where quality of life at work is a tangible reality for all those involved in the educational process. This will provide an environment conducive to the growth, learning and integral development of teachers and students, contributing to the construction of a more educated, equitable and prosperous society.

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