PEDAGOGICAL WORKSHOPS: TEACHERS' MENTAL HEALTH PROMOTION AT SCHOOL

OFICINAS PEDAGÓGICAS: PROMOÇÃO DA SAÚDE MENTAL DOS PROFESSORES NA ESCOLA

TALLERES PEDAGÓGICOS: PROMOCIÓN DE LA SALUD MENTAL DE LOS DOCENTES EN LA ESCUELA

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ABSTRACT: This work represents a segment of the doctoral mental health and education research. The general objective of this study is to investigate political-pedagogical alternatives that can contribute to the well-being of teachers at the Foundation for Technical School Support (FAETEC). As a specific objective, it aims to identify the demands and cases of psychological distress among teachers at the Foundation from 2017 to 2021. Content analysis was used for data processing based on the qualitative research methodology incorporated into the research-action method. The results indicate the absence of a sensitive approach regarding the mental health of education professionals and the scarcity of work environments that promote adequate receptivity for dialogical practices to become an integral part of the teaching routine. Furthermore, the results emphasize the importance of implementing institutional policies that address teachers' mental health as a prominent topic on school agendas.

KEYWORDS: Teacher. Pedagogical Workshops. Institutional Policies. Mental Health.

RESUMO: O trabalho traz um recorte da pesquisa de doutoramento em saúde mental e educação. O objetivo geral deste estudo consiste em investigar alternativas político-pedagógicas que possam contribuir para o bem-estar dos professores da Fundação de Apoio à Escola Técnica (FAETEC). Como objetivo específico, busca-se identificar as demandas e os casos de adoecimento psicológico entre os professores da Fundação no período de 2017 a 2021. Com base na metodologia de pesquisa qualitativa, presente no método da pesquisa-ação, utilizou-se a análise de conteúdo para o tratamento dos dados levantados. Os resultados indicam a ausência de uma abordagem sensível em relação à saúde mental dos profissionais da educação, bem como a escassez de ambientes de trabalho que promovam um acolhimento adequado para que as práticas dialógicas se tornem uma parte integrante da rotina docente. Além disso, os resultados enfatizam a importância de implementar políticas institucionais que abordem a saúde mental dos professores como um tópico de destaque nas agendas das escolas.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Docente. Oficinas Pedagógicas. Políticas Institucionais. Saúde Mental.

RESUMEN: El trabajo presenta un extracto de una investigación doctoral en salud mental y educación. Su objetivo general es: Investigar alternativas político-pedagógicas que contribuyan al bienestar de los docentes de la Fundación de Apoyo Técnico Escolar – FAETEC y como objetivo específico: Identificar las demandas y casos de enfermedad psicológica entre los docentes de la Fundación, del 2017 al 2021. Con base en la metodología de investigación cualitativa, presente en el método de investigación acción, se utilizó el análisis de contenido para procesar los datos recolectados. Los resultados apuntan a la falta de una mirada sensible sobre la salud mental de los profesionales de la educación y la falta de ambientes profesionales acogedores para que las prácticas dialógicas se conviertan en momentos del cotidiano del trabajo docente. Además, los resultados revelan la necesidad de incluir políticas institucionales que incluyan la salud mental de los docentes como agenda de discusión en las escuelas.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Profesor. Talleres de Pedagogía. Políticas Institucionales. Salud Mental.

Introduction

In the context of concern for teachers' mental health in schools, the study formulated the following initial question: "How do we develop political-pedagogical alternatives that promote the well-being of teachers at the Foundation for Technical School Support (FAETEC) in their processes of quality education?" This article presents a segment of the doctoral research titled "The emotional health of FAETEC network teachers: balance and well-being through proactive pedagogical practices." One hypothesis is that adopting a holistic health approach could provide teachers with greater psychological well-being.

The Ethics Committee of IOC/FIOCRUZ authorized the research under the CAAE identification 33694620.4.0000.5248 with opinion number 4.335.072. The study's general objective is to investigate political-pedagogical alternatives that can contribute to the well-being of teachers at the Foundation. To analyze the results presented, a specific aim is to identify the demands and cases of psychological illness among teachers at the Foundation for Technical School Support (FAETEC) from 2017 to 2021.

The research indicates that discussing health also means discussing school. These two dimensions are intrinsically connected, as they address the issue of caring for the human being. Discussing health implies concern for the individual as a whole (Almeida Filho, 2011), involving a comprehensive approach to elements that redefine new perspectives on life at both the individual and collective levels, as well as in the work environments we share and the experiences we exchange.

Almeida Filho (2011) agrees that socio-historical-cultural elements play a significant role in individual health and illness situations. This agreement leads us to endorse Canguilhem (2009) perspective that health and illness should be conceived beyond a purely biomedical and physiological view while not considering these two elements that define the conditions of being and acting as mutually antagonistic.

According to Canguilhem (2005, 2009), health and illness complement and interconnect, traversing paths in our vital organisms and social contexts (Almeida Filho, 2011). This challenges us to understand well-being beyond physical appearances. In this sense, body and mind cannot be dissociated; on the contrary, they must be understood in an integrated manner, as they are interconnected.

The mental state can influence the health of the body, just as the body can manifest signs of health or illness that reflect our psychological state. Furthermore, according to Almeida Filho (2011), the ontogenesis of the individual implies understanding the person in their plurality and

entirety, considering the actions of feeling, being, acting, and living in society. In this way, the constant and uninterrupted interaction between aspects of individual and collective life maintains an intrinsic relationship with the health and illness of individuals.

In this approach, it is possible to understand that experiences of health and illness are not uniform, and individuals experience these experiences in a plural and identity-based manner, shaping and redesigning their lives with each new experience. In this context, it is essential to emphasize that each individual has a unique life experience with their origins, causes, and consequences related to health and illness factors.

These diverse individual experiences direct the focus toward understanding the workplace as a space in which health and illness can influence biopsychosocial aspects. More specifically, it focuses on professionals' mental health and how the relationship between the human being and the work environment can affect their mental health or promote physical and psychological health.

Dejours (1994) and Gaulejac (2007) highlight the mutual influence humans and work exert on each other and how they can strengthen or weaken trust and collectivity bonds. Work affects the individual, and vice versa, establishing a continuous relationship in which knowledge and experiences expand, altering identities, groups, and the work environment itself.

This triple interconnection between the individual, the group, and the work environment can create illness or health promotion situations, depending on the relationship type established in these spaces. Dejours (1994) observes that these interactions can be imposed, lacking in dialogue, involving physical and emotional pressures that do not respect human integrity, without discussion or identification between the parties. According to Carlotto (2003), the relentless pursuit of results and positive goals can turn professional achievement into suffering.

In this context, the school takes on the role of a protagonist in a workplace and social environment in which people engage in various types of interpersonal relationships, encompassing teaching and learning as well as labor-related aspects. Within this multiplicity of interactions, we find teachers, a group that has been facing growing challenges of psychological distress, as highlighted by Carlotto (2003) in his research, noting that education professionals are currently one of the classes most affected by mental health issues.

One of the fundamental causes of this distress lies in the gap between the knowledge acquired in academia and the practical reality of schools (Tardif; Lessard, 2017), (Tardif, 2019). This results in a knowledge disconnect when university-educated teachers confront challenges in the classroom, where they often feel ill-prepared to handle them. Pimenta (1999) emphasizes

the importance of reclaiming the teacher's identity and significance in society by bridging theory and the "school ground" practice.

Furthermore, Tardif (2019) argues that recovering theories reflecting classroom reality requires an ongoing learning process as the teacher performs their duties. This implies the creation of strategies and mechanisms that go beyond the mere transmission of content, valuing the human dimension with its vulnerabilities and potentialities, promoting not only learning but also healthy and productive interpersonal relationships aimed at well-being in human interactions.

The excess of bureaucratic demands and the overload of content to be taught, often disconnected from the school reality and the needs of students, the lack of flexibility in curricula and practices, the undervaluation of the teaching profession, and the absence of a channel for listening to teachers' demands are some of the factors that significantly contribute to emotional exhaustion, frustration, anxiety, and depression, which are latent elements in teachers' mental distress.

Starting from the premise that we are beings composed of a physical and mental body that records the experiences lived throughout our lives, whether positive or negative, it is pertinent to consider Ferguson's reflection (1992, p. 242, our translation) when he states that "over the years, the body becomes a walking autobiography, speaking to friends and strangers about the small and large tensions of our lives," and this implies concern for what is considered healthy or has become ill.

However, it is essential to remember that understanding illness and how it develops in the school context can pave the way for the construction of health within the workplace. As Ferguson (1992) reminds us, we are "walking autobiographies" (p. 242, our translation). The responsibility for developing health promotion strategies and minimizing mental distress falls on the individual, who holds the keys to this process.

Methodology: the path taken

The school plays a significant social role where the vast majority of the population is engaged. Therefore, it is essential for the school, among precepts and assumptions, to direct its concern toward education professionals, especially its teachers, understanding that their role goes beyond the episteme embedded in pre-established curricular practices related to subjectivities and life experiences. In this path, we also find teachers' mental health in their relationship with the work environment.

The methodological framework plays a fundamental role in addressing the dimensions of knowledge acquisition, maintenance, and construction to address issues related to teachers' psychological distress and initiatives to promote teacher well-being. The study employs a qualitative approach, characterized as qualitative research in nature. The analysis is exploratory, aiming to enhance the understanding of the problem, and it uses the action research method (Thiollent, 2011), as a strategy, as it allows for in-depth and extensive analysis of the results, taking into account the relationship between subjects and the world, recognizing that subjectivities and nuances cannot be quantified.

Empiricism, guided by the action research method (Thiollent, 2011), organizes the methodological actions of the doctoral thesis into three distinct phases: diagnosis, intervention, and evaluation. In this article, we focus on the results of the diagnostic phase, in which we used the pre-test questionnaire as a methodological action tool. This enabled the collection of data related to the mental health of the selected teachers and the identification of pedagogical practices for promoting well-being that would best meet the needs of the educators. Therefore, this phase encompasses the general and specific objectives and the initial question that guided the research. It is important to note that the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the empiricism of the study, and some data were contextualized based on experiences of health and illness during this period.

The adopted methodology facilitated the tracking of the journey from the moment a teacher enjoys good health, through the observation of the unfolding of their process of becoming unwell, to the proposal of alternatives aimed at creating fairer conditions in the workplace. This approach was configured as a continuous and dynamic cycle in which the researcher lived experiences and the direct participants, the individuals directly involved in constructing a healthy work-life (Thiollent, 2011).

The research was conducted at the Foundation for Technical School Support (FAETEC), a public entity in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The selection of teachers encompassed two schools belonging to the Foundation, which have distinct profiles: one serving high school (the final stage of basic education) and another offering technical-professional courses.

School A has 318 enrolled students, 40 teachers, and 9 professionals in the management and pedagogy team. Its student body consists of young adults interested in entering the job market. On the other hand, School B has 1500 enrolled students, 212 teachers, and 12 professionals in its management and pedagogy team, with a predominantly adolescent student profile. The research investigated two contexts to understand the relationship between health

and illness in these environments, assessing whether there are significant similarities or differences.

The selection of teachers in Schools A and B included those who had faced mental health issues related to their work. This information was obtained through the pre-test questionnaire administered during the diagnostic phase of the action research. The questionnaire consisted of 15 closed-ended multiple-choice and 2 open-ended questions, administered through the Google Forms platform.

Due to the pandemic context, the pre-test questionnaire was distributed to teachers virtually. Initially, the process involved contacting the school managers of Schools A and B via email, who subsequently sent the pre-test questionnaires to the educational supervisors responsible for the groups of teachers through virtual messaging apps, such as WhatsApp. The research was presented to the teachers through a letter from the researcher, which explained the purpose of the study and emphasized voluntary participation. If interested in participating, the Informed Consent Form was available at the end of the letter. Of the 40 teachers in School A, 22 agreed to participate in the research and completed the questionnaire. From School B, with 212 teachers, 29 opted to participate. The pre-test questionnaire was available for response from May to November 2021.

The collection and analysis of the data obtained from the questionnaires provided guidance for developing pedagogical practices identified as necessary by the participants in the workplace. This methodological approach allowed for a deeper understanding of the contexts involving the participants, generating a new perspective on educational practices in a period marked by the pandemic.

The information collected in the questionnaires was subjected to content analysis, following Bardin's methodology (2011), strictly adhering to pre-analysis criteria, including representativeness, exhaustiveness, homogeneity, and relevance. The identified data were coded and categorized according to Teachers' mental health, Teaching experiences during the pandemic, and Workshops in the workplace.

Results and Discussion: Perspectives on a New Understanding of Teachers' Mental Health

The quantity, intensity, and diversity of experiences play a crucial role in understanding individuals in the workplace, potentially contributing to promoting health and causing illnesses. In this context, a profile of the teachers who participated in the research was outlined to understand their perceptions regarding what can be considered healthy or potentially a cause or

consequence of psychological distress. This focus is relevant for (re)defining the theoretical and practical contexts that permeate the school environment.

The presented results are based on the responses from the pre-test questionnaire, which was completed by 51 teachers from Schools A and B. The responses collected through Google Forms were organized into tables, and the trends identified in the responses were subsequently presented as graphs. The graphical data was grouped into four distinct categories to facilitate the analysis of the information, following Bardin's approach (2011): Teachers' mental health, Teachers' teamwork, Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and Workshops in the workplace. The initial questions of the questionnaire were designed to outline the participants' profiles regarding their professional characteristics.

The questions addressed various aspects of the teachers, including gender, subjects taught, level of qualification, years of professional training, and years of service at FAETEC. Out of the 51 participants, 47% were female, while 53% were male (none of the participants indicated the "other" gender option). Eighteen teachers taught high school subjects, while thirty-three taught subjects in technical-professional courses. In terms of qualification, 57% had completed postgraduate studies (specialization), 35% had a master's degree, and 8% had a doctoral degree. The vast majority of teachers, accounting for 78%, had over 15 years of professional experience, with 12% having between 11 and 15 years of training and 10% having 5 to 10 years in the field. Regarding their years at FAETEC, 49% had been teaching for over 15 years, 12% between 11 and 15 years, 31% between 5 and 10 years, and 8% had less than 5 years of service at the Foundation for Technical School Support.

The initial questions were formulated to profile the research participants. Most of the participants demonstrated having a long history of professional training and work experience at the Foundation, allowing for a deeper understanding of the realities experienced, both individually and within the school context. These responses, combined with their extensive academic backgrounds, have the potential to contribute not only to the investigation of psychological distress, as outlined in the specific objective, but also to address the general objective and the initial question in identifying alternatives for the emotional well-being of teachers in their workplaces.

After profiling the teachers who responded to the questionnaire, specific questions were posed to investigate the professionals' mental health and psychological distress in the workplace. The first category, "Teachers' Mental Health," addressed the self-perception of teachers' mental health. Out of the 51 responses obtained, 57% rated their mental health as fair

or poor, while 29% considered it good, and 14% evaluated it as excellent. These responses indicate the need for a thorough analysis of the mental health of these individuals to understand the factors and social environments that have contributed to psychological distress.

Within the first category, concerning mental health in the workplace, teachers were asked whether they had experienced psychological distress due to work-related issues. Among the 51 participating teachers, 45% reported that it had occurred a few times, 40% stated it happened always or almost always, 10% said it was rare, and 5% indicated they had never experienced this situation. These data, expressed in this question, reinforce the previous conclusions and confirm a relationship between an individual's mental health and their work, in the sense that work can be both a cause and a consequence of their psychological suffering.

The next question aimed to explore the teachers' perspective on the influence of workplace situations as factors contributing to psychological distress. This question was essential to assess whether teachers perceive, even if they are not directly affected that the relationship between work and mental illness negatively impacts job performance. In this regard, 74% of teachers stated that work-related situations almost always influence their mental health, 20% indicated they always influence it, and 6% responded that they never do.

In light of the impressions shared by the participants regarding mental health and the workplace, the subsequent question requested them to identify up to four factors that most frequently led professionals to psychological distress. Inadequate salary was the most mentioned factor, with 77% of the responses, followed by overwork, mentioned by 67% of the participants. 65% of the teachers cited the lack of adequate infrastructure, while 61% emphasized the lack of recognition for teachers. Additionally, 51% indicated student discipline as a relevant factor, and 45% mentioned excessive bureaucracy.

Among the most frequently mentioned factors, there is a connection between inadequate salary and overwork, causing many teachers to take on multiple jobs in different schools to achieve a satisfactory income. This overload prevents teachers from having time for self-improvement and physical and mental rest, making them more susceptible to psychological distress. Furthermore, there is a lack of feedback on their performance in their activities planning and a constant concern about ensuring students' success. This professional devaluation was identified in 61% of the responses, reinforcing the interconnection of these three factors as exacerbating both physical and psychological health, which is the focus of the investigation.

In addition to these factors, the lack of adequate infrastructure, mentioned by 65% of the participants, has contributed to the emotional strain on teachers, generating stress due to the

inadequacy of physical spaces for teaching, both for teachers and students, as well as the shortage of necessary teaching materials to ensure an effective teaching and learning process.

Student indiscipline stands out, with 51% of responses, as a significant factor exacerbating teachers' psychological distress. This highlights that even in the 21st century, discussions on this topic have not been exhausted, and student indiscipline continues to hinder not only the teaching and learning processes but also lead teachers to emotional exhaustion and psychological distress.

With 45% of responses highlighting excessive bureaucracy, it is evident that the teaching profession has become progressively more permeated by bureaucratic tasks involving documentation, spreadsheets, reports, and curricula. This bureaucratic overload has generated discomfort as it consumes an already scarce time that could be directed toward pedagogical matters. This results in the loss of the necessary dynamism to develop pedagogical approaches that facilitate both teachers and students, promoting a more welcoming and less hostile educational experience.

When teachers were asked about the feelings, emotions, and disorders reflecting their psychological distress in the workplace, the most commonly cited options stood out as follows: anxiety, at 80%; emotional exhaustion, at 77%; stress, at 67%; sadness, at 50%; depression, at 40%; and panic, at 26%. These factors may be associated with various previously discussed situations. In the school context, various determinants can lead an individual to psychological distress. It is important to emphasize that our identity, individuality, and how we face everyday situations can make some individuals more susceptible to psychological distress due to these situations than others.

The crucial focus is on understanding the incidence of these factors, how many people are affected by each of them, and how strategies can be developed to make the educational environment conducive to healthy experiences. In this sense, it aligns with Ferguson (1992) in emphasizing that we are "walking autobiographies"; therefore, much of who we are and how we act reflects our work environments. This understanding is essential to guide the implementing of pedagogical practices that promote well-being.

Tardif and Lessard (2017) also argue that what we do becomes an extension of who we are. Therefore, if we face psychological distress, our practices may be more influenced by the issues we carry than by the competencies, skills, and abilities we teach. Problems can overshadow our potential and identity.

The second category, "Teaching Work During the Pandemic," became relevant due to the context in which the research was conducted during the Covid-19 pandemic. The research's start coincided with the pandemic's spread in Brazil in March 2020. This not only impacted the implementation of research methods, which had to be adapted to the remote format, but also had effects on the mental health of education professionals, as schools were closed, and teaching shifted to a remote format, following the guidelines of Opinion CNE/CP n.º 5/2020 from the Ministry of Education.

In this context, it became crucial to analyze the psychological health of these professionals, given the magnitude of the challenges they faced. Participants were asked about how they perceived their mental health during the pandemic. The results indicated that 37% considered their mental health, which was previously regularly worsened during the pandemic; for 31%, it remained at the same level as before the pandemic. Another 14% reported that their mental health was good before the pandemic but deteriorated since then; 9% indicated that their mental health was poor before and remained poor during the pandemic, while the remaining 9% reported that their mental health was regular and improved during this period.

When analyzing these data, the importance of the groups comprising 37% of the participants who reported a decline in mental health, going from a regular state to worsened, and the 14% who had good mental health before the pandemic but experienced psychological distress during this period stands out. These responses may be associated with various factors, such as the transition from the educational environment to the home, uncertainty about the educational future of students, concerns about the quality of education, fear of the pandemic, and lack of access to quality technology.

Adding these two groups together, it is evident that 51% of the participants faced significant changes in their mental health due to the challenges imposed by the pandemic, which substantially impacted the educational environment. This required teachers to adopt new postures, attitudes, and adaptations for which most were unprepared. This transformation can be attributed to new educational paradigms, the adoption of emergency remote teaching, and the physical distancing between teachers and students, which caused significant emotional strain on professionals essential to the teaching and learning process.

On the other hand, a group consisting of 31% of the participants reported that their mental health remained regular during the pandemic, and 9% indicated that the poor mental state they experienced before the pandemic remained unchanged. This represents 40% of teachers confirming that the pandemic resulted in an educational imbalance from which schools

have not yet recovered. Only 9% of the participants mentioned an improvement in mental health, possibly due to the distancing from the tensions of the school environment, such as conflicts among colleagues, student discipline issues, and everyday challenges faced in schools.

The third category, titled "Workshops in the Workplace," emerged as a viable alternative to promote the well-being of teachers, based on the data analyzed thus far. It was essential to implement pedagogical practices to make the workplace, which also has an educational dimension, more welcoming and conducive. In this context, it became relevant to investigate the actions taken to promote the well-being of these professionals from the perspective of those who are the focus of this research, namely, those who have experienced psychological impacts due to the work environment.

Workshops in the workplace emerged as a viable alternative to promote the interaction between mental health, teaching, and the work environment. Therefore, it was essential to understand the participants' opinions about this form of intervention and how they perceived the approach to the problem. Knowing if they had already participated in any pedagogical workshop before or during the pandemic was necessary. In this regard, 70% had never participated in a pedagogical seminar but expressed interest in doing so; only 17% of the respondents had participated 1 or 3 times in some form of experience aimed at promoting workshops on mental/emotional health in the workplace, while 13% stated that they did not like this type of activity.

The 13% group who admitted to never participating due to a lack of interest stood out. The offering of workshops did not meet the expectations of those who would be the participants. Sometimes, activities are introduced unilaterally without considering the needs and opinions of those who will participate in the workshops. This can result in a lack of interest from those involved. It is essential to remember that workshops should be flexible, and different approaches can be offered to different audiences and environments, depending on the goals to be achieved.

A plausible alternative is that this "not liking" may be related to previous unsuccessful experiences that were not aligned with the reality of a specific group or the individual characteristics of certain teachers for whom the workshop was directed. Since workshops encompass a wide range of possibilities, the likelihood of rejection is significantly reduced when the intervention is planned with the active involvement and interest of the group and individual in question.

For the remaining 70%, workshops represented an unexplored and innovative opportunity. They had not yet had access to this experience, which could provide learning, renewal, and reconstruction opportunities, allowing both the collective and the individual to engage in dialogues on personal and professional issues. The expression "I have never participated, but I would like to have participated" may suggest a lack of sensitivity to teachers' psychological health, misinformation, or the belief that there is no need to focus attention on this specific topic in the educational context.

It is crucial to establish a closer connection between education and health. Pursuing a successful teaching and learning process should incorporate care in terms of literacy and the diligence that precedes any teaching practice. This encompasses strategies aimed at the well-being of all individuals involved in the educational environment, ranging from concern for physical space to the structure of the educational system, demonstrating a commitment to the care of both learners and educators.

The responses indicated the need to implement mental health projects that actively involve education professionals. Ideally, these projects should become institutional practices, integrating continuously into the daily life of schools rather than being isolated interventions. The data collected also reflected teachers' dissatisfaction with how the Foundation addresses the well-being of educators.

In one of the open-ended questions, teachers suggested the development of government policies that establish mental health-related practices as permanent components of academic calendars and teaching plans for each school unit. This proposal aims to optimize the relationships between the educational environment and the professionals working there. These suggestions are based on the dissatisfaction of professionals who feel that teachers have been neglected and sidelined in the face of academic performance pressures while caring for the "human material" that drives the "educational machine."

In addition to becoming institutional practices, workshops aimed at teachers' emotional well-being should be sensitive to participants' needs. Therefore, activity suggestions should be considered during intervention planning. In the questionnaire, 45% of teachers emphasized the importance of addressing mental health-related topics, such as stress management, anxiety, and sadness; 30% highlighted relaxation and meditation practices as well as learning breathing techniques; 40% suggested group dialogue and listening sessions; 30% mentioned playful group activities and dynamics, along with technological training. Teachers expressed concern about being psychologically prepared to support their students in educational and emotional

needs. For them, caring for their mental health is fundamental to empowering them to assist students in coping with situations of frustration and helplessness.

After analyzing the responses, suggestions emerged for conducting focused discussion sessions on topics such as anxiety, stress, and emotional management. Once again, the importance of directing thoughts towards one's health and that of the students was emphasized, recognizing the interconnectedness of both and emphasizing that caring for one reflects caring for the other. Within these approaches, proposals include relaxation, meditation, breathing techniques, and enhancing voice usage to achieve serenity and reconnection with oneself and others. These discussion sessions are highlighted as crucial to promote the practice of listening within the group, strengthening the idea that collectivity should embrace the individual and vice versa.

There was also a mention of the need for workshops or other support resources related to technology use. This observation reinforces how the technological issue impacted professionals during the pandemic period when many teachers faced structural challenges for remote teaching, which, in turn, affected their psychological well-being, especially when they felt unprepared to deal with students in challenging situations.

In open-ended questions, teachers emphasized the importance of making the processes continuous, as often projects were initiated but did not maintain the desired continuity. For them, work in this area should be developed with seriousness and commitment, focusing on promoting the mental health of those who work in the school environment.

Concluding this assessment process, it was of paramount importance to understand the level of trust teachers had in this type of intervention within the school context. Without this trust, labor workshops and similar initiatives would have difficulty achieving the desired results. Teachers were asked if they believed that proactive pedagogical practices, such as labor workshops, could contribute to improving the mental health of education professionals.

The response to the question revealed that, for 77% of the teachers, the investment in proactive pedagogical practices is considered valuable. These activities, such as labor workshops, have the potential to act as supportive tools in both teaching and pedagogy. They represent a viable approach to understanding what happens to teachers beyond the classrooms, contributing to creating a welcoming environment sensitive to their needs. These moments stand out by not focusing exclusively on the profession but also the human dimension and subjectivity inherent to each individual. This collective approach seeks to develop alternatives that promote health and well-being in the workplace.

Although the vast majority expresses support for the implementation of mental well-being strategies in the school and the reconceptualization of the school space as a health promotion environment, the 17% who, while recognizing the importance of these tools for human connection and health, do not believe that these interventions have a significant impact on the mental health of professionals, deserve special mention. This perspective may be influenced by the lack of consistency in well-being programs and the absence of clear evidence of short and medium-term benefits. With the implementation of improvements and the establishment of more solid routines, it may be possible to change the perception regarding these health promotion approaches.

The participants' suggestions can serve as a starting point for creating emotional well-being practices directed at teachers. Respecting the particularities of each school environment, it is viable to establish a work environment based on dialogue and attention to the needs of the group and individuals before prioritizing curricula and program content. Engagement and actions to build a welcoming environment result in a more productive learning process, benefiting teachers and students. Implementing mental health practices in the school represents a commitment to a sensitive and dedicated perspective toward a social organism composed of all those who interact interpersonally and professionally in the school space.

Final considerations

The interconnection between health and education demands an approach that considers these two spheres articulated when reflecting on the teaching career in the school institution and its potential implications. Beyond their role as an executor of institutional procedures aimed at facilitating effective learning, the teachers are human beings with their own needs and aspirations, deserving to be recognized.

Often, their function is emphasized at the expense of considering the biopsychosocial factors that make up their identity. In addition to fulfilling guidelines and procedures, the teacher is an integrated entity of body and mind whose weaknesses and capabilities deserve to be respected and acknowledged.

The school, situated in the social context of individuals, plays a relevant role in shaping the identity of people and their life perceptions, influencing interpersonal relationships that occur in the educational environment. In this scenario, questions related to well-being and illness inherent in the human experience arise.

In this context, the issue of the illness of primary education teachers, represented by the participants in the research conducted in the FAETEC network units, raises the need to direct our focus to the pressing demands of contemporary society. Here, the emphasis lies not only in the academic preparation of the professional but also in consideration of the emotional and sociocultural supports necessary to face the challenges and rewards of teaching in the 21st century, aiming for a genuinely democratic and health-promoting education with a holistic approach to the individual.

The administration of the questionnaire during the diagnostic phase of the research guided the findings that addressed the first specific objective. In this way, as a social and working environment, the school can manifest itself in welcoming or hostile ways because education transcends pedagogical theories and practices to incorporate the individuals who attend its premises daily. From this dynamic, relationships of collaboration or conflict, proximity or distance, harmony or misunderstandings emerge, and emotional variables introduce many possibilities.

The interviews highlighted the importance and urgency of raising awareness among education professionals about their health, with a particular emphasis on their mental state, as many face mental health issues without adequate knowledge. In addition to awareness, the need for concrete measures to support these professionals was emphasized, ensuring that these processes unfold in their workplace promoting a reconnection between the teacher and the professional environment.

In response to the general objective and the central question of this research, the promotion of a welcoming, simultaneously pedagogical work environment can be achieved through the implementation of psychological well-being practices referred to as "labor workshops." According to the research participants, these workshops emerge as a viable alternative to integrating mental health in the school context, going beyond mere discussions about illnesses and providing practical strategies to address the issue. Furthermore, there is a strong appeal for these workshops to be formally institutionalized, making them a permanent part of the school context.

This approach can represent a comprehensive approach to health promotion, where teaching practices become vehicles for acquiring knowledge in various areas and spaces for plural construction, where individuals' subjectivity and mental health are considered fundamental elements for developing activities in the school context.

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