

Special call: Tourism and Covid-19

Working conditions at home during the pandemic: an analysis of collective subject discourse of workers in the travel agency sector

Condições de trabalho em casa durante a pandemia: uma análise do discurso do sujeito coletivo dos trabalhadores do setor de agências de turismo

Condiciones de trabajo en el hogar durante la pandemia: una análisis del discurso del sujeto colectivo de los trabajadores del sector de agencias de viajes

Ivan Conceição Martins da Silva¹; Marina Hastenreiter Silva²; Mayra Laborda Santos³

¹ Researcher linked (by CAPES) to the research group "Tourism: Management and Territories (TGTur)" at Federal University of Fluminense, Niterói, RJ.

² Rural Federal University Rural do Rio de Janeiro (UFRRJ), Rio de Janeiro, RJ, Brazil.

³ Center for Interdisciplinary Studies of Amazonian Culture (Neicam), Manaus, AM, Brazil.

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Abstract

The Covid-19 pandemic accentuated labor precariousness and exploitation of workers through new work configurations, such as the home office model, the transformation of home into a working environment, the intensification and flexibility of working journeys and the loss of social rights. Thus, this study aimed to analyze the working conditions at home during the Covid-19 pandemic based on the collective subject discourse of workers in the travel agency sector. Therefore, the theoretical-methodological path was guided by the method of complexity, including bibliographic research, data collection by virtual interviews, and application of Collective Subject Discourse and Discourse Analysis. As a result, workers had contradictory and complementary perceptions of their working conditions during the pandemic, with emphasis on: significant wage reduction; lack of healthcare for workers; and work at home without guarantee of adequate resources. Therefore, it becomes evident the precariousness of working conditions and the shattering of social labor rights.

Palavras-chave:

Trabalhadores;
Home office;
Covid-19;
Turismo;

Resumo

A pandemia da Covid-19 agravou as condições precárias de trabalho, já em curso, e acentuou a exploração dos trabalhadores a partir de novas configurações do labor, como o home office, a transformação do lar em ambiente de trabalho, a intensificação e flexibilização das

Complexidade.

jornadas e a perda de direitos sociais. Assim, a presente pesquisa teve como objetivo analisar as condições de trabalho em casa durante a pandemia da Covid-19 a partir do discurso do sujeito coletivo dos trabalhadores do setor de agenciamento de viagens. Para tanto, o percurso teórico-metodológico foi norteado pelo método da complexidade, contemplando pesquisa bibliográfica, entrevistas virtuais para coleta de dados e aplicação do Discurso do Sujeito Coletivo e da Análise de Discurso. Como resultados, observou-se percepções contraditórias e complementares dos trabalhadores quanto às suas condições de trabalho durante a pandemia, destacando-se: redução salarial significativa; desproteção à saúde do trabalhador; e migração ao modelo de trabalho em casa sem garantia dos recursos adequados. Dessa forma, torna-se evidente a precarização das condições de trabalho e o esfacelamento dos direitos sociais trabalhistas.

Palabras clave:

Trabajadores;
Home office;
Covid-19;
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Resumen

La pandemia de Covid-19 acentuó la precariedad laboral y la explotación de los trabajadores a través de nuevas configuraciones de trabajo, como el modelo de home office, la transformación del hogar en un entorno laboral, la intensificación y flexibilidad de las jornadas de trabajo y la pérdida de los derechos sociales. Por lo tanto, esta investigación tuvo como objetivo analizar las condiciones de trabajo en el hogar durante la pandemia de Covid-19 sobre la base del discurso del sujeto colectivo de los trabajadores del sector de agencias de viajes. Así, el camino teórico-metodológico fue guiado por el método de la complejidad, incluyendo investigación bibliográfica, entrevistas virtuales para recopilación de datos y aplicación del Discurso del Sujeto Colectivo y de la Análisis del Discurso. Como resultado, los trabajadores tenían percepciones contradictorias y complementarias de sus condiciones de trabajo durante la pandemia, con énfasis en: reducción significativa de salarios; falta de protección para la salud de los trabajadores; y trabajar en casa sin garantía de recursos adecuados. Por lo tanto, se hace evidente la precariedad de las condiciones de trabajo y la destrucción de los derechos laborales sociales.



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1 INTRODUCTION

In 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic has had a global impact and, regarding employment, it exposed and enhanced the contradictions and low standards imposed upon the working class. According to Antunes (2009), working in the service sector and at home are two trends that may represent these low standards.

When analyzing the state of the working class during the pandemic, Antunes (2020) indicates two threats. On the one hand, the situation of workers was already, even before the pandemic, one of extreme and growing precariousness, based on practices like: oppression and exploitation of women, people of color, immigrants, indigenous peoples, and LGBTQIA+ groups; growth of informal jobs and structural unemployment; and use of technological progress as a form of digital slavery. On the other hand, the pandemic and its global proportions, even though its biological consequences are universal, had a discrimination bias on social matters: mainly impacting the working class from a sanitation and economic standpoint.

Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2020) points out that the recommendations for self-isolation and working from home only encompass a privileged section of the middle class, effectively ignoring informal, precarious, and self-employed workers that earn their income outside the home.

Still according to Antunes (2020), the Covid-19 pandemic indicates three characteristics of the future of work: a) the exploitation of the workforce as the cornerstone of capitalism; b) uberization of work, in which companies exploit their workers, without legal bond, through digital platforms; c) the growth of digital labor – telework, home office, and distance learning.

In this landscape, one of the most affected sectors was tourism. The overall halt in travels has plummeted the revenues of companies in this sector and in line with the trends of job precarity a massive number of tourism workers have suffered layoffs and setbacks in their rights. It is important to remember that, since December 2018 – last year shown in the data from the Instituto de Pesquisas Aplicadas (IPEA) – around 52%

of jobs in Tourism were informal. As such, the pandemic has heightened, in a catastrophic manner, a landscape that crushes work conditions and rights in a ratio of more than one informal job to every formal one.

Searching for a way to stay in business, many enterprises have opted to migrate a portion of their activities from a physical environment to a virtual one (sales, administrative routines, and operational support) (Mayer & Coelho, 2020). Following, in a faster way, a shift that began a few decades ago, mostly in the travel agency sector: the adoption of the home office.

Among the circumstances that influenced this scene, what stands out is the constant development of information and communication technologies that resulted in the adoption of remote customer outreach and the performance of most work activities through technological tools and resources. However, with the pandemic, the workers that were not in home office, but performed their remote activities in the employer's physical space, were obliged to work from their homes because of social distancing.

In this context, work in tourism, especially the jobs in the travel agency sector, are threatened by these three topics: increasing job precarity; migration to the home work model without a guarantee of adequate resources; and the impacts of the pandemic in labor rights.

As such, the objective of this research is to analyze home-working conditions during the Covid-19 pandemic through the collective subject discourse of the workers in the travel agency sector. To that end, the research uses a multimethodological perspective (Flick, 2009), with a methodology of qualitative nature and approach, an exploratory character, and an epistemological foundation based on the complexity paradigm (Morin, 2006).

The theoretical and methodological path was implemented in four steps: 1) building the theoretical framework about the working class, home working, and work in tourism through bibliographical research; 2) virtual interviews with workers in the travel agency sector, in June 2020, to uncover their perceptions about the working conditions during the pandemic; 3) using collective subject discourse to systematize the collected data and synthesize the individual opinions into a collective thought; 4) apply discourse analysis to clarify the ideological standpoint of these workers in relation to their working conditions, contrasting discourse to a concrete work environment.

The setting of this study was the city of Rio de Janeiro, integral part of Brazil's main tourism destinations. The city's service sector, of which tourism is a part of, was the country's second biggest revenue in 2017, with a gross value added of over 263 million reais, representing 5.7% of the country's service GDP.

As to the numbers of formal employment regarding companies that perform tourism characteristic activities (TCA), the travel agencies of Rio de Janeiro, in December 2018, had 6,841 formal occupations, which represent 2.8% of those in the State's TCAs. These numbers unequivocally show the relevance of this sector to State's and TCA's economy. Besides that, since the start of the pandemic, agencies' employees had to deal with their customers' inquiries, keeping, however, some demand for work, even if it is a small one, including postponing and cancelling flights, repatriation, and various other types of guidance. Because of that, this study included travel agency sector workers, understanding that this complex sector includes travel and tourism agencies, consolidators, and travel insurance companies, all of which provide services to the sector.

The aforementioned landscape highlights, therefore, the justification for this article, that intends to correct a lack shown by a search made in June 2020 in the "Publicações em Turismo" and "Dissertações e Teses da CAPES" databases, that made clear that research in tourism working conditions is still an underdeveloped topic. Even the studies found in the search, using Boolean operators "work" AND "tourism"; "workers" AND "tourism"; "work" AND "agencies"; "workers" AND "agencies", discussed these themes without diving into their subject matter, brisking over working conditions and using seminal authors in sociology of work superficially.

Extreme precariousness of work happening worldwide puts into question how much the mandatory migration of paid workers to a situation of home work is beneficial to the working class. The purpose of this study is to unveil the contradictions present in the workers discourse and, through that, elucidate the impacts caused by the Covid-19 Pandemic in the working conditions of the tourism sector. We hope to explain this situation

going beyond the surface and, in any way, contribute towards the urgent movements facing the productive and reproductive dynamics of the capital.

2 CONTEMPORARY WORKING CONDITIONS AND PRECARIOUSNESS

According to Saviani (1994), the advent of modern society and the ways of capitalist production changed class and work structures. Work and property lost a community value and the working class became 'free' to sell its workforce as their means of existence were lost (Saviani, 1994). Also, with the development and change of capitalism, new forms of work appeared and the working class started showing some heterogeneity. As Antunes (2009, p. 103) states, the “amplified notion of working class includes, then, all of those who sell their workforce for a salary” – which encompasses workers in the rural, industrial, and service sectors, as well as the precarious, informal, and unemployed.

Mattos (2019) when analyzing the worldwide working class situation, points out several ways in which job precarity affects work in a capitalist system, such as: structural unemployment; half of the world's workforce being informal; drops in salary and unionization; using the youth, women, people of color, and immigrants to enlarge relative overpopulation, reducing salaries and putting these groups in precarious working conditions; slavery or slave-like labor; submitting children to child labor; failing to recognize the rights of rural and domestic workers. Therefore, what can be seen is a process through which diverse groups are overly exploited in the search to strengthen the capital at the expense of the working class. Through this process, the Capital also appropriates the ways through which one can work at home.

2.1 Aspects of home work

The widespread usage of the Internet and the constant change in Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) are increasingly influencing telework. Consequently, some companies have been using it as a way to reduce costs such as rental, work commute, electricity costs, worker's food and transportation, cleaning and maintenance, and other costs (Basso & Junior, 2018; Ebert, 2019).

In this context, the Labor reform Law 13,467/2017, through Articles 75A to 75E of the Consolidação das Leis Trabalhistas (CLT), regulated telework. However, there are questions about the guidelines of this law as to the conditions of the work environment and the labor rights of the employees (Dacheri & Feuser, 2019; Basso & Junior, 2018).

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, telework has grown because, in many cases, it is the only form of work compatible with social distancing. The term home office is used as a synonym of telework, making it important to distinguish the two. Telework is work that can be performed anywhere provided access to the internet and/or ICTs, not necessarily in the employee's place of residence. Home office, however, happens in the worker's home, also allowing for sporadic activities in the company's space and the use of ICTs will depend on the situation. In addition, according to Ebert (2019, p. 166):

the company that submits their employees to a home office system should not only pay for the necessary equipment to the work's performance, but also acquire the materials (such as: computers, telephones, furniture, etc.) necessary to ensure the physical and psychological integrity of the employees (Ebert, 2019, p. 166).

The unprecedented Covid-19 pandemic situation allowed for work to be performed from home without planning and proper work environment organization for the workers.

2.2 Tourism Work

Since the 1960s, tourism starts growing in the Global South under the premise that the peripheral countries have scenic natural landscapes capable of attracting an international demand of tourists, aside from the discourse of revenue and job creation for a big number of unemployed people (Meliani, 2011). The prevalent

capitalist discourse has been launching tourism as an answer to social evils and focusing on the high employment rates of the sector as one of the main benefits of implementing this 'activity' in peripheral regions (Gomes, Silva & Silva, 2010).

Nonetheless, although tourism development in the peripheries of capitalism has resulted in "isles of prosperity", the peripheral condition was not overcome. Ouriques (2012) warns that, for most of the inhabitants of peripheral countries, including tourism workers, the possibility of development through tourism is nothing but an illusion, because progress in this sector does not include them. What happens, in truth, is a substitution of old economic activities for new ones connected directly or indirectly to tourism.

In line with Cañada (2017), there is a difficulty in understanding the boundaries of work in tourism, because the activities of other sectors that are not exclusive to tourism service are involved. To Cruz (2018), the economic activities that compose the "economy of travel and tourism" encompass industrial (transport and civil engineering), commercial, and service activities, "which implies the acknowledgement that productive capital in tourism is, paradoxically, largely, out of it, in sectors with which tourism keeps somewhat direct relationships, but certainly dialectic relations of dependency and influence" (Cruz, 2018, p. 11-12).

In Brazil, there is an attempt to outline these occupations according to IPEA (2014), the so-called Tourism Characteristic Activities (TCAs), which represent the largest part of the tourist spending, like: accommodation; food; air transportation; ground transportation; water transportation; tourism agencies; transport rental; and leisure and culture (Coelho & Sakovski, 2014).

Santos (2018, p. 120) highlights the nature of tourism economic activity, considering the aforementioned TCAs, "it strongly manifests through informality, seasonality and turnover, [culminating in] the employment of a workforce with low education, low expertise and low pay", resulting in precarious work conditions.

In line with Martoni and Alves (2019), the workers of TCAs and tour guides (although tour guides are sparsely included in the TCAs, the authors discuss this occupation separately from the other ones contained in SIMT/IPEA) have countless similarities in working conditions, among these the frequency of overtime, low number of breaks in work hours, constant threat of unemployment, low pay, lack of expertise, work routines that demand certain behaviors that create discomfort in the workstation.

The authors also underline a constant worker turnover that gradually worsens the work conditions of new employees because of pressure from employers, negatively affecting their physical and mental health. The exploitation is even more pronounced in high season, something that demands flexibility of working time.

This flexibility, to Dal Rosso (2017), is a process of worldwide reach, meaning a "dismantling of work through removal of rights and achievements of workers" (Dal Rosso, 2017, p. 266), perpetrated by Global Capital. The flexibility of working time, of contract, of salary, of work environment, leads to a "withdrawal of rights, expansion of new frontiers of accumulation and [...] transformation of non-working time into working time" (Dal Rosso, 2017, p. 266).

The big accommodation chains (particularly resorts and cruises), travel agencies offering 24/7 customer service, and others, appear as examples to understand flexibility of tourism work. In traditional company hierarchy, positions with better pay (but not only those), like manager, for example, requires exclusive dedication of workers, that must be available full time, to the company, disregarding weekends, holidays, overtime, weekly days off. This hierarchical patronage, also takes free time from the workers, because, in the conditions already mentioned, any time becomes work time (Dal Rosso, 2017, *passim*).

In this way, amongst the characteristics of the tourism job market we can observe extensive and flexible workdays, a single worker being responsible for a multitude of different occupations without being paid accordingly and a high number of informal workers. It is important to point out that tourism demand fluctuates according with the economy, that is, if the economy grows, so does tourism and not the other way around (Santos, 2018).

Thus, the fluctuations of tourism demand, caused by low and high seasons as well as variations in the economy, result in changes in the demand for jobs. Hence, the employers tend to seek flexible manpower that

adapts to tourism flows (Cañada, 2017). Because of the temporary character and low education requirements, the wage remuneration of these workers tends to be below the wage average of other sectors of the economy.

Still in agreement to Cañada (2017), the tourism Capital seeks to reduce the labor costs through a reduction of payment, work intensification, and flexibility of workers. As stated by Dal Rosso (2017) the flexibility of work aims to remove labor rights that increase the price of the workforce. That results, among other, in: temporary part-time jobs instead of a permanent job; cost reductions in regards of recruitment and dismissal; outsourcing. The consequences of these actions are not only an inferior quality of tourism jobs, but a rupture in the working class, which makes it even harder for unionization and leads to further loss of labor rights, informality, and precariousness (Cañada, 2017).

Informality, according to Meliani and Gomes (2010) and Meliani (2011), is one of the characteristics of the tourism sector, owing much of it to seasonality. Because of that workers are hired temporarily to answer the demands of the high season. As soon as the flow of tourists stops, workers are laid off to prevent further expenses to the employers.

Tourism agencies, as in Coelho and Sakovski (2014), make up the Core of Tourism Characteristic Activities, together with lodging and air transport. The difference between these TCAs to others is the fact that customer service is mostly directed to tourists and not residents. Even so, for Santos (2018), it is important to show that although the companies that compose the 'Core' of the TCAs boast major services to tourists, they create few jobs in the sector. According to the data from IPEA (2018), this Core accounts only for 23% of tourism employment in 2018. Regarding specifically tourism agencies, Santos points out that the sector suffered a major downfall in workforce in the last decade, due to the rise of ICTs and Online Travel Agencies (OTAs).

The growth in ICT usage – both in travel and tourism agencies and in the tourism industry in general –, extended working hours and transformed non-working time in working time, since, with technological innovations, working from home or anywhere else is a possibility, provided the right tools and resources are available. In this sense, both Harvey (2011) and Dal Rosso (2017) show similarities in their respective views, for they understand technology is essential to the upkeep of the capital's status quo, speeds up the production processes of the proletariat, and reduce the necessity of expanding the workforce, because, in the same timeframe, a worker yields much more than they used to without new technologies. With ICTs, reduction of the necessary working time has become a possibility, while the surplus working time increases.

The ICTs, conforming to Melani (2011), allow for higher productivity rates in tourism agencies, due to the vast number of sales and customers served in a short amount of time by a small number of workers. The agencies employ directors, managers, agents, operators, receptionists, that provide customer service in shops, offices, or anywhere else through ICTs and the Internet.

Thus, the addition of technology enables the extraction of relative surplus-value (Paulo & Braz, 2006), resulting in an increase in productivity while decreasing the necessary working time to the worker's social reproduction and increasing the time used to generate profit, that is, surplus-value. What also occurs is the extraction of absolute surplus-value, with intensification and lengthening of the workday (Ouriques, 2005).

According to the data from IPEA, the average wage remuneration of workers in tourism agencies in Brazil was R\$ 2,706.67 in 2018 (IPEA, 2018). The minimum salary, in 2020, is R\$ 1,407.81 for group 3 (Operation Auxiliary, Administration Auxiliary, Reservation Department Auxiliary, National Sales Clerk and Bus Station Pass clerk), R\$ 1,607.73 for group 4 (International Sales, Operation Assistant, Events Assistant, Currency Exchange Operator), R\$ 1,802.42 for group 5 (Operation Chief, Supervisor, Treasurer) and R\$ 2,118.52 for group 6 (Manager) (SINDETUR-RJ, 2019). All these figures are higher than 2020's minimum wage (R\$ 1,045.00), however, according to the Departamento Intersindical de Estatísticas e Estudos Socioeconômicos (DIEESE, 2020), the ideal minimum wage, one that would allow the Brazilian worker to support a family of up to four people should be, in September 2020 (last month in the information database), R\$ 4,892.75 (higher than the double of the minimum salaries, and more than four times the current minimum wage).

Even though the tourism agencies are among the highest paid in the TCAs, only lower than the transport sector, the data and the arguments stated in this section expose the precarious conditions of the tourism proletariat.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, the Federal Government, through Law 13,982, April 2, 2020, adopted emergency measurements to subsidize companies and workers. For workers without an employment bond, *microempreendedores individuais* (MEI), INSS taxpayers, and informal workers (employed, self-employed or unemployed), the government has put forward a relief emergency program offering a minimum income of R\$ 600.00 or R\$ 1,200.00 (Lei 13.982, 2020). For companies and formal workers, instituted, through the Provisional Measure 936, April 1, 2020, the Programa Emergencial de Manutenção do Emprego e da Renda which had, among its main directives the payment of Benefício Emergencial de Preservação do Emprego e da Renda, that foresaw a proportional reduction of the workday and wages; and temporary worker contract suspension (SINDETUR, 2020). If we consider a wage that was already, before the pandemic, lower than the minimum necessary for worker reproduction, we witness a situation of extreme precariousness in which workers have to make substantial cuts in their budgets.

3 THEORETICAL METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

The present article, qualitative in nature and with exploratory character, is based on a multimethodological perspective (Flick, 2009), and uses bibliographical and field research.

The scientific method used is the complexity paradigm and it is based on three principles: 1) dialogic – the object is analyzed through two lenses, simultaneously contradictory and complementary; 2) recursive – mutual production between two objects/phenomena, being both product and producer of each other, and; 3) holographic – the existence, regarding the composition of the objects/phenomena, of the whole in each part as well as each part existing in the whole (Morin, 2006).

The theoretical methodological framework of this study was divided into four stages.

The first stage consists in a search aiming to select studies that make up the theoretical reference around the themes “Work in Tourism”, “Workers of Tourism” and “Working Conditions in Tourism” in the main Brazilian Tourism database (Publicações em Turismo) and in CAPES' Thesis and Dissertations database, in June 2020. However, there was an evident scarcity of output that has not only shown the gaps in these themes, but also a need to deepen the theoretical basis of seminal authors in sociology of work.

Primary data collection, in the second stage of the research, was made through virtual interviews conducted in June 2020. The interlocutors were workers in travel and tourism agencies, consolidators, and travel insurance companies in the city of Rio de Janeiro. The methods of this stage are shown in Chart 1.

Chart 1 - Primary data collection procedures

PROCEDURES	DESCRIPTION
Search for interlocutors	Use of the Snowball technique (Vinuto, 2014).
Selection of respondents	Criteria: a) a minimum of three years of employment in companies of the travel agency sector; b) is currently working at home for one of these companies during the pandemic; c) companies are based in Rio de Janeiro.
Elaborating the questions	Based in the premise of collective subject discourse for data collection and systematization.
Virtual interviews	Use of a semi-structured script consisting of open-ended questions

Source: The authors.

The goal of the interviews was to understand the respondents' perspective on the recent changes of their working conditions due to the Covid-19 pandemic, mainly regarding: work environment, work routine and workday; resources and tools necessary when working from home; labor rights and wage remuneration. It is important to point out that both the script and the systematization of data from the interviews were guided by the use of Collective Subject Discourse (CSD). As such, the CSD was an integral part of the second and third stages of the research.

According to Lefèvre (2017), the CSD is a group of techniques used in qualitative research that allows grouping and identifying opinions and single thoughts with similar meanings present in a given time and space, that are experienced by a certain group, professional occupation, society or culture. In Chart 2 we can see the stages of CSD processing.

Chart 2 - Procedures of Collective Subject Discourse processing

PROCEDURES	DESCRIPTION
Obtaining the answers	Interviews and transcriptions
Curtailing the discourse through key expressions	Selection of meaningful verbal content
Finding meaning through Central Ideas (CI) and Anchorages (AC)	The CIs are pieces of information present in each answer and in a group of answers from separate individuals that show complementary or similar meaning. The ACs are formulas that describe ideologies, values, beliefs, present in either single or grouped answers and read as general linguistic marks. All answers have CI, yet some are supported in AC
Categorization process	Happens by way of induction through synthesis of similar elements present in the respective answers' CIs and ACs
Elaborating the CSD	Key expressions whose CIs and/or ACs have been grouped in a single category

Source: Adapted from Lefèvre (2017 and M. H. Silva, 2019).

As such, the result of CSD application is the creation of text that expresses discourse targeted at a collection of researched individual subjects, allowing those to be observed as a collective subject. To Lefèvre (2017), the CSD should be written in singular first person because it makes possible to create discourse based on “direct expression of collective thought: what I (collective) think and not what he (the researcher in third person) thinks I am” (Lefèvre, 2017, p. 36).

The CSD expresses the perceptions of a Collective. But, through a dialogic perspective (Morin, 2006), it is understood, in this research, that the perceptions of workers about their own working conditions also represent a statement of their concrete reality. The travel agency sector workers' CSD shows the group's conditions, but, still as discourse, it is traversed by ideologies through which the individual subjects comprehend reality. Because of that, in the research's fourth stage, Discourse Analysis (DA) was used in the hopes of unveiling the ways that discourses and ideologies in the CSD function. The DA procedures applied in this model are the following (Chart 3):

Chart 3 - Discourse Analysis Procedures

(Continue)

PROCEDURES	DESCRIPTION
Selection of the analysis corpus.	Using the third stage's CSD.
Definition of the theoretical analysis device	Composed by the theoretical reference built for this research, present in section 2.
Text search for the meanings listed in the theoretical device	Discourse sequences are highlighted (text excerpts with discourse present).
Inferring the formal marks in the highlighted sequences	Formal marks are excerpts infused with meaning by the discourse inside the own text. Those were inferred by observing the text and its patterns.
Inferring the discursive properties in these marks	Discursive properties are meanings attached to the marks that organize discourse. Those were inferred by observing meanings that formal marks have in common.

Chart 3 - Discourse Analysis Procedures

(Conclusion)

PROCEDURES	DESCRIPTION
Understanding Discourse Formation (DF)	The DF corresponds to flowing discourse, when taken into consideration that discourse does not have a well-defined limit (neither beginning nor end, or a clear distinction separating it from other discourses). Through dialogic principles, a search for contradictory and complementary discourse formations about working conditions was made.
Understanding Ideological Formations (IF) that rule the identified discourse formations	The IF is the, also flowing, ideology that governs discourse. The reduction of discourses into ideologies were made following recursive and holographic principles.
Discourse Analysis	Confronting the functions of contrary discourses through the point of view of the complexity principles.

Source: Adapted from Orlandi (2003) and I. C. M. Silva (2019).

The discussion regarding the results of the CSD and DS will be based on the theoretical reference, considering the complexity perspective.

4 THE TRAVEL AGENCY SECTOR WORKERS' COLLECTIVE SUBJECT DISCOURSE

In total, twenty (20) workers of Rio de Janeiro's agency sector were interviewed, thirteen (13) men and seven (7) women, ages 26 through 64. As for the place of residence of the people interviewed: one lives in Niterói; one in São Gonçalo; three in the Baixada Fluminense region; and fifteen in the city of Rio de Janeiro.

Regarding education: four have finished secondary school; one has finished tourism technical school; five are still in higher education; nine finished higher education, five specifically in Tourism; and one finished a *lato sensu* graduate program.

About their occupations in the sector: eleven participants work in travel and tourism agencies; six in consolidators; and three in travel insurance. The interviewed workers are spread across 12 different companies.

The positions are, commercial manager, accounts executive, and international clerk. Regarding the terminology used during mandatory social distancing, only one uses telework, while the others use home office. Only five of them claim to have done home office before.

Although current company time varies between six months and a year, in tourism these figures are much higher, comprising periods of nine to 48 years.

When looking into the home environment, which has direct influence over the work environment during pandemic, the workers, in average, share a house with two other people. One worker stands out for sharing a house with eight people. Seven live with their children, five of them with infants.

To understand the working conditions of these workers, the creation of the CSD was based in five topics: workday; work environment; resources and tools; labor rights and wage remuneration. In a recursive and holographic (Morin, 2006) perspective, these topics make up the core of the working conditions the same way that the working conditions make up theirs. These topics served as a category selection and grouping parameter in presenting the CSD. The occupations presented throughout the session are not all the inferred CSD categories: the charts present the categories and the discourse sequence examples that better represent each analyzed topic.

As to the workday (Chart 4), its exhausting length was already controversial before the pandemic.

The CSDs point out three situations. In one of them the workday is reduced according to the emergency measures sanctioned by the federal government. In another, the workday remains the same as before the pandemic, minus the commute. In one situation the workday was legally reduced, but only as a way of diminishing the workers' wages and benefits, because the hours are, effectively, the same.

Chart 4 - CSDs about the workday

CATEGORY	DISCOURSE SEQUENCES
Reduction of the workday	The workday did not stay the same, it's shorter. The company adopted the Government plans to preserve jobs, so we work in a smaller time schedule.
No reduction of the workday	My workday hasn't changed. The schedule within which we're available is the same.
No right to disconnect	So, I need to stay available even after working hours for office related functions. In the office, when the shift was over, I would close and leave.

Source: The authors.

Labor precarity is present in the discourse both before and during the pandemic: the migration of a fixed workday into a flexible one all throughout the day and week. The separation between living time and working time becomes gradually smaller, not through a choice made by the worker, but a company's imposition (either open or veiled). In these circumstances, working time invades and suppresses the living time, creating precarious working conditions, like exhaustion, frustration, and dissatisfaction.

In the topic of work environment (Chart 5), we can see the physical, social, and relational conditions towards work space.

Chart 5 - CSDs about work environment

CATEGORY	DISCOURSE SEQUENCES
Loss of physical contact	I miss my people, I miss being close to my co-workers, even the playfulness. I miss it so much! This personal connection is very important, especially if you work with in-store sales, the face-to-face, selling on the spot, solving problems on the spot.
A 'toxic' work environment	Our work environment is a little bit toxic, so I think no one misses the place.
Losing sight of the teleworker's space and time boundaries	Another thing, when you're in the office, you stress about work at work. But at home, work related stress ends up stressing you at home, something that doesn't have anything to do with your house. So, you end up bringing your work problems home.

Source: The authors.

Regarding spatial conditions, some subjects point out the need to adapt their homes into a work space, which leads to certain difficulties. Proper furniture, physical space and silence are fundamental to concentration and productivity. Socially speaking, we realize that: when there is a good relationship between co-workers, distancing causes feeling of sadness and estrangement; yet when the relationship is bad, distancing is treated as a good thing. In this sense, it is possible to infer that co-worker relations also integrate working conditions. And the conditional relations are connected to the meaning the subjects attribute to work related spaces. Working at home is regarded as positive when compared with the lack of security in the means of transportation used to commute to work or the separation between the workers and their families during office hours. Equally, the work brings its negative aspects home, such as hassles and stress. The relationship between worker, work, and environment also impacts the working conditions.

In the topic of necessary resources and tools (Chart 6), the following were mentioned: Internet, computer, reservation software systems, online conference apps, and printers.

The CSD points out that some companies have taken responsibility to provide equipment and programs, others only part of the equipment, and some did not offer anything. Even so, hardly any offered assistance relative to the Internet provider. Besides that, few subjects link the necessary resources to adequate space, silence, and furniture. These issues, as seen, are associated with the work environment, but do not come into question when the subjects discuss the resources. This means that: first, these subjects do not realize the direct importance of these resources to their working conditions; and second, the companies do not take any responsibility regarding those matters.

Chart 6 - CSDs about necessary resources and tools for work at home

CATEGORY	DISCOURSE SEQUENCES
Use of tools and technology resources	Good Internet! In terms of tools, we mainly use computers and cellphones. And in these, these programs: <i>WhatsApp, e-mail, Zoom, Google Meeting</i> , and the like. Also, the company's system, the reservation systems. The cellphone is an important tool.
The company has provided us with equipment and tools	The day they sent us home we brought the computer. We had to adapt the machines so we could use the systems from home.
The company has partly provided us with equipment and tools	The only thing the company provided was the laptop.

Source: The authors.

It is clear that the companies do not take responsibility for work environment related resources in home work practices, such as Internet, adequate space, and furniture. This indicates a severe state of worker exploitation in the sense that they, while performing the same functions, need the same resources, but those are not supplied by the company, resulting in extra costs and use of their own home and resources to work.

As to labor rights (Chart 7), we can notice distinct opinions about the same things.

Chart 7 - CSDs about labor rights

CATEGORY	DISCOURSE SEQUENCES
Reduction of labor rights	Everything was cut in half, benefits, meal vouchers. So, all labor rights were cut in half. I only get my wage. They don't deposit my severance money, the whole meal vouchers, only partial. And the government doesn't cover these vouchers, so I'm in a bad situation because I didn't stop working, I don't eat 30% of what I used to.
Adapting rights	I don't feel like I lost rights, I feel like they were adapted

Source: The authors.

A portion of the subjects believe there was no impact on labor rights. Nevertheless, considering previous results, such as exhausting workdays, inadequate work environment, and an absence of necessary resource help from the company, the perception that there were no change in labor rights is contradictory. Another discourse sees the changes as "adaptation". This train of thought points to the idea that rights are seen as something malleable, that depend on the circumstances – as the social context shifts, the rights could be manipulated without loss to the workers. As for the subjects that realize there was a loss, their discourse stresses this reduction very negatively. Stresses how this change severely impacts workers' life and how companies take advantage of their vulnerability to impose this new system.

It is important to note that most subjects connected labor rights exclusively to salary. Beyond salary, only financial questions were discussed. Workday, health, and work conditions were not seen as labor rights.

In the topic of wage remuneration (Chart 8), the discourses point to a 35% to 80% drop in monthly earnings.

Chart 8 - CSDs about wage remuneration.

CATEGORY	DISCOURSE SEQUENCES
35% salary loss	Without my commissions my income dropped about 35%.
50% salary loss	The people that stayed suffered a 50% salary reduction; it was a very big difference. We cut every spending we could at home to fit inside a 50% pay.
75% salary loss	Everyone whose work depend on commissions was heavily affected. We had a sales loss on the magnitude of 75% total.

Source: The authors.

Several work precarity mechanisms through wage remuneration can be seen in these discourses. The most mentioned was the commission system, through which workers are not assured of their rights and a significant amount of their income. Benefits are also unassured, like three-year bonuses, wage compensation for corporate officers, financial aid regarding meals. Some subjects even pointed out an informal fixed wage, parallel to the official registered one. Through these systems, companies pay a share of the worker's wage illegally – creating a vulnerability situation for the workers by cutting benefits short and not guaranteeing the upkeep of this extra income.

As can be observed, the sector does not necessarily share a single cohesive discourse. Inside the collective subject's unity, there is a plurality of perceptions and stances specific to individual subjects – both cohesion and contradiction form, dialogically, this CSD.

5 DISCOURSE, IDEOLOGY, AND WORKING CONDITIONS: COMPLEX RELATIONSHIPS

Based on the theoretical reference, the CSDs were searched for meanings related to working class and capital representations. Chart 9 shows categories with working class related meanings.

Chart 9 - Working class related discourse sequences

TOPIC	CATEGORY	DISCOURSE SEQUENCES
Workday	Unofficially, there is no reduction	But unofficially we always have to be available. There is no "lunch break". If someone calls you at one o'clock and you're having lunch, it doesn't matter, you put away your food and pick up.
Environment	Lack of space and adequate work equipment	Having to improvise a room into an office and finding a quiet spot wasn't very easy. I really don't have enough space at home to work the way I like to; in the same conditions I have in the office. I had to adapt a part of my home that wasn't meant for that.
Rights	A great loss in labor rights	Actually, you lose all your rights. A huge loss! It's what they say that counts and if you want to keep your job you have to nod and say amen

Source: The authors.

The formal marks in these excerpts point out a discursive function based on criticizing certain working conditions. Moments like "it's no use giving you piles of work", "as long as you're not late", "it's no meant to do that" and "a huge loss!" show dissatisfaction towards the conditions enforced by the companies and, even though in a respectful manner, a non-conforming attitude regarding such practices.

As such, it can be inferred that this Discourse Formation (DF) represents criticism of working conditions. The meanings that surround this DF are: criticism of long workdays; appreciation for human relationships with co-workers and family; criticism of the company's refusal to provide rights and resources; and a lack of appreciation for abstract activities. When comparing this DF to class statuses, an Ideological Formation (IF) aligned with the working class can be found.

Chart 10 shows categories with Capital related meanings.

Chart 10 - Capital related discourse sequences

TOPIC	CATEGORY	DISCOURSE SEQUENCES
Workday	Excessive workday as a standard	If you call me on a Sunday, I'll answer the phone the same way. If I were working at home today without the pandemic, it would be the same as an office.
Environment	Well-being at home	I love my home, I feel good here! I organized my space for this, only for work.
Resources	The company didn't provide equipment	The computer is personal, the phone is personal. This <i>WhatsApp</i> number is my private one
Rights	Wasn't affected	In principle nothing, for the time being our work wasn't affected because the company is doing what it can so we get to keep our rights. I'm getting paid as usual, everything in order. I can't complain.
Compensation	Conformity	There was no difference. If we don't sell, there's a reduction in the final budget

Source: The authors.

Denial about change and neutral language are formal marks that indicate a discursive function based on normalizing certain practices. There is a non-critical tone present in sentences like "the computer is personal, the phone is personal", "our work wasn't affected" and "there was no difference".

We can infer that this DF relates to the normalization of precarious working conditions. The meanings that this DF conveys into the text are: the worker having to take responsibility for the assignments, resources, and wages; exempting the company from taking responsibility for rights; normalizing the length of an exhaustive workday; and valuing productivity. These meanings refer to an IF that represents the Capital's interests.

Some complex interactions can be observed regarding this IF. The comparison between the discourses and the actual conditions of the interviewed workers reveal some contradictions and complementarities.

First, all participants use ICTs in their labor activities, that constitutes telework (Ebert, 2019). Adopting telework is a strategy used by companies to reduce costs through cuts in the upkeep of physical spaces and the workers' food and transportation. This cost reduction is, in fact, referred to by various participants as a reason for keeping this system after the pandemic.

However, 18 workers denominated their home work practices as home office. Based on the definitions by Ebert (2019) and Rasfalki and Andrade (2015), such work practices cannot be denominated home office because none of the companies supplied the workers with the necessary and adequate equipment to work at home. The Capital strategically uses the home office category to impose on home work a sort of fetishization, making the workers' alienating condition even more evident.

As to the routine of work assignments, some discourses showed that working at home has improved the workers' quality of life because of the comfort of one's own residence and the removal of work commute. Even so, the start of the pandemic did create an overload of work, such as flight reservation problems and customer repatriation. Considering that the chronic tourism worker exploitation is based on the seasonality of tourism (Meliani & Gomes, 2010), the question becomes if the worker upkeep done by the companies represented institutional security or just something based on convenience.

The contradiction between longer and flexible workdays is also present in most discourses. In line with the observations made by Dal Rosso (2017) and Martoni and Alves (2019), the workers are required to dedicate themselves exclusively, which also incorporates non-working hours like weekends, holidays, and vacation days that go unpaid and not even legally recognized. Although it looks like a reduction of the overall working time, the workers are overloaded because the workday has been lengthened, encompassing the whole day and even the week. This also results in a cost reduction for the employers, that are not required to hire due to the exploitation of current workers.

Another relevant piece of data is the presence of discourses that indicate conformity or indifference as to salary reduction. The role of the employers in pressuring employees (Martoni & Alves, 2019) must be mentioned, because some of them report the development of mental health issues, both their own and colleagues' issues, due to the inability to close sales – especially those that depend on commissions. With that, it is visible that the internalization of the DF that regards normalizing precarious working conditions can create, dialogically, both cohesion in a discursive aspect and health hazards in a material aspect.

This last contradiction, the situation in which three workers, employed in a company that pays a fixed salary with no commissions, but higher than the minimum salary in the sector, may represent a positive stance for the working class – especially considering the difference between this minimum salary figures and the ideal minimum wage calculated by DIEESE (2020). When compared to the others, these workers have more financial rights guaranteed when taking their income into account and are less vulnerable to the pressures of a commission system.

In this sense, it is important to show how alienated from their labor rights these workers are when attributing the expression only to wage related issues. It has become evident how fragmented and depoliticized the working class is. Even before the pandemic, a great part of the workers in the travel agency sector did not have rights such as vacation days and severance funds in exchange for receiving commissions informally. The pandemic landscape brought, in a certain way, less legal oversight to some of these practices that aim to alienate workers from their rights. A post Covid-19 scenario tends to be even more precarious for this sector because times of crisis create new labor relations and work deregulation processes; that, in turn, spikes precariousness and flexibility regarding labor rights (Antunes, 2020; Mayer & Coelho, 2020)

Lastly, there is a contradiction between turnover and longevity in the company. Current scientific analysis shows high turnover as a characteristic of the tourism sector, especially when it comes to informal jobs (Cañada, 2017). In relation to the interviewees in this research: on the one hand, they have been working in tourism for long periods of time; on the other, the time put into the current companies varies, and even people with decades of work in the industry have no more than a few years or months in the companies in question. This points to the fact that, even having experienced the high turnover the sector is known for, working time can generally infuse the discourses with a narrative of belonging to a company, be it because the person identifies with it over time or longs for an easy retirement.

Thus, the IF aligned with the Capital and the one for the working-class work in a complex contradictory and complementary dynamic. It is important to notice that the DF that criticizes working conditions does not involve issues on resources, wages, and health. Even though the workers notice the problems in these topics, their discourses do not attribute responsibility over these precarious conditions to a single entity. Precariousness is observed as a given fact, unquestionable or unavoidable. Still, the precariousness normalization DF does not encompass issues with labor activities. The work, in itself, has not been analyzed in a critical way. It is plausible to infer that this collective subject keeps the daily practices of work in mind and not its underlying structures. In general, the absence of the workers' IF in several aspects show that there is a preponderance of the capital's IF in the discourse of travel agency sector workers.

6 CONCLUDING REMARKS

The Covid-19 pandemic deepened some of the, already existing, precarious working conditions and worker exploitation practices through arrangements like home office, transformation of the home into a work environment, lengthening and flexibility of the workday and the loss of benefits like food vouchers. In this setting, working at home is a new contradiction to the working class: it represents a reasonable alternative to massive dismissal, as seen in the accommodation sector, for example; however, the idea that it was the only alternative to lay-offs led to furthering a landscape of degrading work conditions.

Specifically, for the travel agency sector, precariousness was even more intense, in one way by reducing demand, which resulted in dramatic losses in sales commissions and, consequently, more pressure on workers, in another as a labor rights flexibilization, that led to reduced salaries, contract suspension, lay-offs.

Thus, the goal of this research was to analyze home working conditions during the Covid-19 pandemic through the collective subject discourse of the agency sector's workers. In this sense, an alienation of the working class towards its labor rights and real working conditions can be observed. A part of the workers is seduced by the Capital's discourse while being largely influenced by the time spent working in a certain company and an extensive and convincing business lexicon that, as Antunes (2020) states: sells illusory forms of work to simulate the real meaning behind new labor morphologies. The result: a fragmented working class, resistance towards unionization, intense digital slavery, decimation of non-working time, and a dismantling of the legislature that protects labor (be it relative to the workday, wage remuneration, or working conditions).

The main shortcoming of this research is the influence of the timeframe in the results, a consequence of the insecurity and rapid changes brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic. In June 2020, the state of Rio de Janeiro was under official quarantine for about three months and the return of presencial activities for the companies in the agency sector was in sight. This has had two effects on the subjects' perception of reality: 1) the constant pressure of a possible dismissal was at a low point, because in the event of a possible return, the companies would need workers; 2) a possibility of going back to the old routines, activities and human relations made possible by work. Consequently, there is the possibility that the perceptions of the interviewees present an optimistic and less critical character if compared to the beginning of quarantine, when sales were at a halt, all activities revolved around solving problems and the threat of mass dismissal was a reality.

Other shortcomings are also: interlocutor distractions, when interviews were conducted through cellphone instead of a computer; and the tension involving a sensitive discussion of labor rights, fearing that the negative feedback on company practices could hurt the employers and, possibly, ensue retaliation.

It is important to reiterate the contributions brought on by this research, mainly in relation to the unprecedented methodological triangle build specifically for this article: Discourse Analysis, Complexity, and Collective Subject Discourse. The information collected in the interviews reveal the workers' perceptions on a still developing landscape that lacks scientific production aimed at mapping the contemporary context in which the tourism working class is inserted.

As a suggestion of continuity of this line of research, it would be beneficial to see studies that further analyze: the relationship between the workers' education and low wages; the topics of gender and race, like social reproduction for women with double burden; mobility regarding workers that live far from the workplace; long and flexible workdays and precarious conditions in non-pandemic situations. Moreover, a larger cutout that encompasses workers of other companies/services in the tourism sector, such as accommodation or guides,

and using a longer timeframe, so that contradictions can be understood and open doors to even more studies on the theme. In addition, presential interviews and observation cultures behind some companies could, maybe, supply other points of view and evoke different ways to perceive these situations that were not covered in this research.

Lastly, the fear of the current working conditions outliving the pandemic must be addressed. Once the Capital experiments with new possibilities to deepen the exploitation of the workforce and the extraction of surplus-value, it will hardly turn back and give up the newly acquired financial benefits. The present study provides insights into the working class, especially travel agency sector workers, through the use of scientific knowledge, contributing to the understanding of its material reality and finding new ways to subvert it.

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Information about the authors

Ivan Conceição Martins da Silva.

He holds a Master's degree in Tourism from the Fluminense Federal University (UFF) and a Bachelor in Tourism from the Federal University of the State of Rio de Janeiro (UNIRIO). He is a member of the Research Group Tourism, Management and Territories (UFF) and of the Research Group on Public Tourism Policies, at the University of Brasília (UnB). His areas of interest include public policies; professional qualification; tourism education; tourism and work; scientific methodology; and tourism epistemology.

Contributions: Research design. Literature review. Data analysis. Discussion.

E-mail: ivanmartins@id.uff.br

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3353-3463>

Marina Hastenreiter Silva

She holds a Master's degree in Tourism by the Graduate Program in Tourism from the Fluminense Federal University (PPGTUR-UFF). She specializes in Tourism, Environment and Business at the University Estácio de Sá (UNESA) and graduates in Tourism at the UniverCidade. She is a member of the Research Group Tourism, Labor and Territory (UFF) and the Research Group on Social Studies in Hospitality and Leisure (UFRRJ). Her main research interests include tourism, tourism and territory, urban tourism, and working conditions in the tourism sector.

Contributions: Research design. Literature review. Data collection.

E-mail: marinahs@id.uff.br

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2024-7265>

Mayra Laborda Santos.

She holds a Master's degree in Tourism by the Graduate Program in Tourism from the Fluminense Federal University (PPGTUR-UFF). She is a member of the Center for Interdisciplinary Studies of Amazonian Culture (Neicam) and the Research Group Tourism in Times of Pandemic. Her main research interests include tourism in the Amazon; tourism in protected areas; working conditions in tourism.

Contributions: Research design. Literature review. Discussion.

E-mail: mayra_laborda@id.uff.br

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0286-8378>