

# PROFESSIONAL INCLUSION OF DOWN SYNDROME WORKERS IN THE CITY OF SÃO PAULO: PERSONAL ACHIEVEMENT, PRODUCTIVITY, AND SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS IN THE WORK ENVIRONMENT

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## ABSTRACT

The objective of this article is to present a debate about data collected within the scope of the research *Professional Inclusion of Workers With Down Syndrome in the City of São Paulo* developed at the Laboratory of Studies on Prejudice located at the Psychology Institute at the University of São Paulo. The survey, held in 2017, aimed to understand different dimensions regarding 20 young people with Down syndrome being included in the working world. Based on the data collected through observations and semi-structured interviews with young people, co-workers, managers, family and friends, the research analysed aspects related to personal achievement, productivity, and social relationships that occurred in the workplace. Despite the general trend towards precarious working conditions affecting a significant part of the Brazilian population, young people showed satisfaction with their work activities. They proved productivity compatible with the activities they were required to perform and maintained good social relationships with colleagues, managers, and clients in the companies they worked.

## KEYWORDS

professional inclusion, critical theory of society, Down syndrome workers, prejudice

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# INCLUSÃO PROFISSIONAL DE TRABALHADORES COM SÍNDROME DE DOWN NA CIDADE DE SÃO PAULO: SATISFAÇÃO PESSOAL, PRODUTIVIDADE E RELAÇÕES SOCIAIS NO AMBIENTE DE TRABALHO

## RESUMO

O presente artigo objetiva apresentar as discussões acerca dos dados coligidos no âmbito da pesquisa *Inclusão Profissional de Trabalhadores com Deficiência Intelectual na Cidade de São Paulo* desenvolvida no Laboratório de Estudos sobre o Preconceito, sediado no Instituto de Psicologia da Universidade de São Paulo. A pesquisa, realizada em 2017, objetivou compreender diferentes dimensões referentes à situação de inclusão de 20 jovens com síndrome de Down no mundo laboral. A partir de dados coligidos mediante a realização de observações e entrevistas semiestruturadas junto dos jovens, colegas de trabalho, chefias, familiares e amigos, a pesquisa analisou aspectos concernentes à satisfação pessoal, à produtividade e às relações sociais que se dão no ambiente de trabalho. De modo geral, mesmo diante da tendência generalizada de precarização das condições de trabalho de grande parte da população brasileira, os jovens demonstram satisfação com as atividades laborais, apresentaram produtividade compatível com relação às atividades a eles requeridas e mantiveram boas relações sociais com os seus colegas, chefias e clientes das empresas em que trabalhavam.

## PALAVRAS-CHAVE

inclusão profissional, teoria crítica da sociedade, trabalhadores com síndrome de Down, preconceito

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## INTRODUCTION

The reviews about changes within the work scope, mainly during 19th and 20th centuries, aim at significant moves towards personal empowerment possibilities in the face of the entire social organisation. The transition from material production, based on small family businesses, to an organisation based on the progressive rationalisation with technological base, which allowed greater exploitation of the productive forces and the expansion of the capitalist mode of production, ended up obliterating the possibilities of expression of individual freedom in the face of powerful mechanisms of control and administration of collective life that characterise the current mode of production. Due to the self-preservation need, people need to integrate themselves — through intense socialisation processes at different institutions, since early childhood, to the domination rationale (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1947/1985). The contemporaneous industrial civilisation reduces human life capabilities to the income principle, demanding people vital energy to the status quo maintenance, which ensures the production and the capitalist reproduction. The technological rationale that describes the world of work overruns all human relationships, from family entities to educational ones and all social stages. According to Marcuse (1964/1979):

the government of developed and developing industrial societies can only be kept and guaranteed when it successfully assembles, organises, and exploits the technical, scientific and mechanical productivity available to industrial civilisation. And this productivity gathers the society, above and beyond any person or group interests. (p. 25)

Under these conditions, people should try hard to adapt themselves to the social order to ensure the material grounds needed to make their living possible. Group and personal interests are consumed by the workforce technological rationalisation. The basic needs of feeding, housing, clothing, and social group sense of belonging are monitored by a rationale that does not refer to these needs fulfilment, ultimately, but for keeping the domination devices and life administration. Through intense training processes, people, due to the pressure for social order adaptation, are forced to identify themselves with the immediate and automatic means of production. The social order's repressive character implies a great control over the individual and the group vital energy and ends up by framing false needs production that prevent the capacity for awareness of the faced oppressiveness. According to Marcuse (1964/1979):

we can distinguish the real needs from the false ones. The "false" ones are those over imposed to the person by peculiar social interests when restraining him: the needs which immortalise the hard daily work, the aggressiveness, the misery and the injustice. (p. 26)

Due to the current civilisation stage accrued material, the expended energies towards the labour — the meaningless work — could be mobilised to fulfil the true needs and no longer those which detach individuals from their sole satisfaction of their potentialities, the possibility of human life happiness realisation.

Marcuse (1955/1968) calls attention to the destructiveness as opposed to "the awareness that (people) could work less and define their own needs and pleasures" (p. 93). This destructiveness contains the irrationality in the workforce, which does not accomplish the current time possible capabilities, even in the face of technological advance, but also in the evaluation provided by a "false awareness" about these social determinations. When questioned about his own happiness, the person answers according to his integration with the whole, although a damaged whole. The satisfaction evaluation shifts and changes the happiness contents. According to Marcuse (1955/1968):

the principle expresses a condition more than peculiar, more than subjective; happiness is not on the pure sense of achievement, but on the concrete situation of freedom and achievement. Happiness concerns of knowledge: it is a privilege of the *animal rationale*. With the awareness decline, with the information control, and the individual's absorption by the mass communication, knowledge is managed and conditioned. (p. 96)

The theorist understands that happiness needs knowledge and pleasure for the concrete realisation of freedom. However, freedom and knowledge find difficulties in our society due to alienated work. To Marcuse (1964/1979): “the person who is alienated gets drowned by his alienated existence” (p. 31). Marcuse shares the Marxian view to distinguish labour and toil. The alienated work, on which the relationship with the object is lost, forbids knowledge and freedom. The alienation principle has become doubtful to Marcuse due to the individuals’ tendency to identify with the existence they imposed on themselves (Marcuse, 1964/1979). However, like Marx, the author understands that awareness arises from the subject-object relationship and the possibility of understanding and anticipating the attainment of a free society. The revolution or workers’ fight for a decent life is possible at each glimpse of freedom and dignity present in the objects of social life.

Would it be possible to be happy and pleased with the work nowadays? According to Marcuse’s comprehension (1964/1979), one can be happy if he gets to know and achieve freedom specifically. This achievement, however, cannot be possible in the face of the domination imposed by the managed life. Nonetheless, the author explains that: “the more rational, productive, technical, and total the repressive of society management becomes, the more unimaginable are the ways and means by which managed individuals can break out of their servitude and gain their own release” (Marcuse, 1964/1979, p. 28).

If the possibility of breaking down with servitude seems to be a glimpse in the middle of a managed life, we need to understand the moments in which the workers may foresee knowledge and freedom. In the case of this study, it is necessary to understand some aspects of the situation of including workers with Down syndrome in the world of managed work.

## **THE SITUATION OF WORKERS WITH MENTAL DISABILITIES IN BRAZIL**

In Brazil, during the 90s, some laws were published concerning the right of people with mental disabilities to work positions. The Law No. 8.213/1991 (Lei nº 8.213/1991, 1991) granted the right to work to people with mental disabilities, deploying plans and benefits from Social Security. Article 89 of this law states that it is Social Security responsibility to provide “qualification and social rehabilitation” to a person with mental disabilities, as well as a beneficiary partially or totally disabled, being responsible for providing to these beneficiaries “the means of professional (re)education and (re)adaptation aiming to join the market labour and the country situation in which they live” (Lei nº 8.213/1991, 1991). In Article 93, the law imposes a percentage of workers with disabilities within the total number of employees in a company.

If “the exclusion always brings a specific organisation of interpersonal or intergroup relationships, in a material or symbolic way” (Jodelet, 1999, p. 53), so we can understand that the quoted law aims to organise these relationships, mainly towards the work of people with disabilities. In the organisation of work, we must pay close attention when the exclusion becomes:

in the case of segregation, through a leave, of keeping a topological distance; in the case of a marginalisation by keeping an individual away from a group, an institution, or a society; in the case of discrimination, through the access closing to some assets or resources, some papers or status or even through a differential or negative closing. (Jodelet, 1999, p. 53)

Considering this concept provided by Jodelet (1999), Crochick et al. (2013) developed research inspired by Frankfurt studies (Adorno, 1950/2019), on which segregation, marginalisation, and discrimination were analysed as prejudice expressions in the context of inclusive education. Similarly, the professional inclusion of workers with mental disabilities is understood as a necessary political action to overcome topological segregation in the workplace, the marginalisation that sets workers apart from labour relations, and the discrimination which refutes equality at work.

Costa et al. (2011) appreciate the labour activity by people with mental disabilities as part of social inclusion. They present a recurring excuse provided by companies for not hiring people with mental disabilities for having professional skills. Still, according to these authors, in answer to the request for more qualification, professional training workshops for work in specialised institutions can provide greater autonomy for future workers; however, they also suggest that these workshops may indicate that people with mental disabilities would not be “ready” for adult life.

Regarding the conditions of inclusion of a person with Down syndrome in the labour market, Zarur and Domingues (2017) declare that:

Down syndrome is related to learning difficulties, meaning that the employees with trisomy will probably take longer to perform some activities. That does not mean that these tasks will not be done or will be done wrongly. Thus, it is always important to follow up this person’s adaptation to work to determine, together with this employee, which will be his/her responsibilities and activities to be developed. (p. 34)

However, it is necessary to question if this “learning difficulty” would not be associated with negative social representations towards Down syndrome, mainly at the workplace. On the other hand, it is common sense that all workers need the training to perform their work tasks.

It is necessary to consider that the number of hiring people with mental disabilities is low compared to other disabilities and, when they occur, the open jobs are operational, performing simple tasks and with low compensation (Lorenzo & Silva, 2007). Simonelli and Camarotto (2011) suggest an inclusive model based on each labour function responsibilities, which would make it possible to hire people with disabilities. To the researchers, it is necessary to evaluate the requested abilities for the performance of different positions in the companies and analyse people with disabilities skills towards their

possibilities, knowledge, barriers, and facilitators for carrying out such activities. The knowledge application “model” for the companies’ requests, clearer at the professional inclusion of a person with disabilities, but common to all other workers, is the aspect of a repetitive activity, of a thought reduced to a private mechanism.

## **METHOD**

The method and data presented in this article stemmed from one research called *Professional Inclusion of Workers With Down Syndrome in the City of São Paulo*, developed by the Laboratory of Studies on Prejudice (LaEP; Laboratório de Estudos sobre o Preconceito), at Psychology Institute at the University of São Paulo, organised by José Leon Crochick, held during 2017 and published on 2019 (Crochick, 2019). The research was a reapplication of the study called *Professional Inclusion and Life Quality*, coordinated by Carlos Veloso da Veiga. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 20 workers with Down syndrome, their families, friends, colleagues, and managers. After an interview (pre-test) took place with one of the workers, the instrument — basis for the interviews to come — has reached the following dimensions: general characteristics of the workers; social relationships/interactions; psychological well-being and personal satisfaction; job; self-determination and autonomy; personal skills; community fitness; independent living experiences and community insertion. The observations covered the following dimensions: knowledge application at work; tasks and other achievements; communication; mobility and social interaction. The present article deals with the following dimensions: job realisation, productivity, social relationships in the workplace.

At least two interviewers handled the interviews and observations during the work schedule of these young professionals. All of them have signed an informed consent form. Participants were named with a “P” letter and a corresponding number. The indication of these participants was provided by two institutions in the city of São Paulo which work with people with disabilities inclusion.

## **DESCRIPTION AND DATA ANALYSIS**

Among 20 participants of this research, 12 worked with services (shops, restaurants, drugstores, etc.), five in companies or offices and three in the educational area. Relatively to each occupation, 12 worked as assistants, four as stockists, which indicates, as in the study of Veiga and Fernandes (2014), that the activities they performed were, in general, of support or simple execution. The average income (R\$1,176.84) of the research participants was slightly higher than the national minimum wage (R\$954.00) and also than the “Paulista” wage floor (R\$1,108.38) at the moment this study took place (2017). Nevertheless, the wages were not high at all.

We should consider that the Brazilian income distribution is unequal. Having this in mind, the salary of these research participants cannot be considered insignificant. A

possible hypothesis for this income may rely on the type of company or service chosen by these institutions and families. Companies and services with more than 200 employees must have a quota of workers with disabilities, pay salaries, and benefits equal to other workers, and hire them via Brazilian Labor Law (BLL). Also, it should be considered that these amounts were compatible with the wage floor agreements negotiated between companies and unions that covered, above all, medium and large size companies. During this research, 42% of the Brazilian workers were in informality (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística, 2018) — without contribution to social security — receiving low wages, no benefits, and no labour rights. This data is relevant as long as the increase in the number of workers in the informality tends to press down workers' wages in formality.

The participants of this research were on average 28.8 years old and worked for 6 hours daily. They had relative stability on their jobs — an average of 3.6 years in length. Two participants worked for 9 years on the same job and another for 13 years. Three participants did not receive complimentary benefits, and only two did not have a contract via BLL. The complimentary benefits mean a plus to the wage, and the contract via BLL granted labour rights, which meant an advantage compared to the high percentage of informal workers in Brazil, as already demonstrated.

Considering the reasons for hiring these workers, 10 family members responded that it was due to the quotas. Among these, two have indicated that specialised institutions enabled the job; three of the relatives mentioned that the hiring has occurred because of the institutions' roles, and the other five mentioned that the family found the opportunities. According to the employers, 10 participants were hired due to the quota law; another three were hired because they were family friends, and another one was hired through an association working in recruiting and selecting professionals with disabilities.

The quota law (Lei nº 8.213/1991, Article 3) can be understood as an essential policy for these young people to be included in the workplace. It is also remarkable that families had been responsible for five jobs within this sample, which indicates that only the quota law is not enough to support these workers. Presumably, it would be very good to raise awareness the employers about these Down syndrome workers' skills, aiming at the prejudice reduction towards them. The data of this research effectively indicates the variety of activities these workers with mental disabilities can develop, besides so many others, as long as they are prepared for these tasks and are let to perform them, as it happens to the other workers.

Most of the interviewed families (16) evaluated that their relatives earned what they deserved. Among these, three stated to receive more than they deserved; two did not know what to answer, and just one of the families answered that he did not earn what he deserved. The same families informed that the workers liked their job; two said they did

not always like the activities developed, and one said they did not like the job. These data might indicate that their children being hired is enough for them; how much they make, what they do, and if they could have another activity or earn more do not seem relevant. If this is true, the fight against prejudice cannot leave behind the families. Some parents did not believe their children could have a better job and earn more; some said these workers did not rely on this salary, and others answered they never thought about it.

Here are some of their declarations: “he gets more than expected” (P3’s family members). “I am not sure if he can get a better job and a higher wage” (P16’s mother).

I do not question if he deserves what he receives. He would not get a job with a better qualification. Friends with Down syndrome work serving coffee, etc. ( ... ) We do not have this worry. He does not work for the money. We save everything on a savings account. (P2’s father)

I think he gets more than he deserves. Considering his case, the company had to give him all the necessary support so that he could adapt and learn his tasks while working. So, ( ... ) in the beginning it was very difficult because he was paid to learn the basics. The company had to invest in his improvement. Therefore, I think that, considering this, his salary was fair enough. (P4’s family members)

From this set, only P16’s mother questions if her son could receive more. The mother of another young adult, P18, has claimed that her son “could have a better job and a better salary, as he is capable of that”. These positions show the possibility of questioning some stereotypes about these young people’s skills to have better job positions in the workplace. These positions would contrast to other workers’ parents’ speeches which confirmed that their children could not get more, expressing a more resigned attitude towards their children’s situation.

The following section will analyse the aspects concerning these young adults’ satisfaction with the activities they develop in the workplace.

## **JOB SATISFACTION**

Assunção et al. (2015) searched for identifying the dimensions which determined the worker’s satisfaction: fair and adequate compensation; occupational safety and health; an opportunity to use and develop capabilities; opportunity for continued growth and security; social integration; constitutionality and social relevance of work and its importance to life.

All participants answered affirmatively about the sense of achievement at work, and 18 demonstrated satisfaction towards their earnings. Less than half of them was promoted or received a salary increase. Although Veiga and Fernandes (2014) say that there

is no great incentive for career progression nor salary increase for workers with mental disabilities, seven participants were promoted and/or received a salary increase. During his interview, P1 showed that his work was an essential part of the activities of his life:

I am happy at work ( ... ) I am working because I like it, it is important to have money, but money is not all in life, the most important is to be happy. I do not know about the possibility of receiving more money in the near future, but I do not care. I want to work, live my life and be happy ( ... ). Another promotion, and another job may come ( ... ) whatever comes is profit to me.

It can be noticed from these reports that part of the workers did not feel the need to change work. However, it should be considered that, as per Coelho et al. (2014) that the fact that some workers feel realised with their jobs could be related to the fact that there are not many job opportunities for people with disabilities. The boredom which “exists in life under bullying at work and under tough job division” (Adorno, 1969/1995, p. 76) seems to be felt by all the workers, but it does not seem to be more important than suffering from the possibility of being excluded from the professional life.

Participant P12 has declared: “I love to work; I do not want to stay at home doing nothing”. We can understand that the boredom of “being at home doing nothing” seems to be the reason why the participants prefer working. She showed pleasure by feeling useful and active. At the same time, it is possible to conclude a kind of fear for running out of work, once this would imply being excluded and refrained from social life, a threat which hangs overall at a hierarchical society on which having a job is a structural condition for life maintenance. Thus, P12’s speech shows that professional inclusion has a significant meaning for her life quality, which implies not necessarily that her work was tedious, but it would be more pleasant to work than not to work.

The importance of having a job was also pointed out by P19:

I think it is important to have a job because I can stop and think that many people would like to be at work and cannot. I keep on thinking about the life of those who do not work because sometimes we do not want to go, do not want to wake up early and go to work, but this is part of the world we live in.

Another participant showed gratification for his/her job, saying that: “because I can do what I love to do, to be a professional and to have a career” (P18). P18 believed that “to have a job is important because it gives more opportunities for those who have Down”. There is some sympathy in his speech, and he encourages employers to acknowledge the meaning of Down syndrome professionals inclusion in the workplace. Feeling happy at his workplace, P14, in his turn, has even considered it therapeutical. Thus, he had a different perception from what is usually identified as stressful work, which causes pain

or sacrifice. His activities were effectively varied, not recurring, besides being admired by his colleagues and, especially, by his manager. Nonetheless, this participant said that he could change his job. His expectations searched for better living conditions within possible changes, something obvious among young workers: the expectation of progressing at work and having an increasingly comfortable life.

While showing to be happy with his job, P16 was one of the seven participants who was promoted and received more than when he was hired, and he expected to earn even more. This participant seemed interested in building his own career within the same company. Like P14, he had a plan to have a better life. They were happy to have a job, as indicated by previously mentioned workers, and it is especially important when the economic recession remains in the country.

Other workers (P3, P13, P15, P17 and P20) expressed annoyance for the need to face some limits at work during their performance. P15 declared: “to work makes me happy because I feel I am useful”, has also mentioned that he “loved to sell”, but this activity was not allowed to him once this was not his job at the company. P17 declared that a dream became true when he started working, but unfortunately, his job would never allow him to have direct contact with customers: “I have the feeling that at work, people keep me training and performing elementary activities. I want to work, to do more interesting things, not only be in training”.

These stories express discrimination of these workers due to the hypothetical limitations imposed by their managers and co-workers, generating deprivations and possible situations considered social humiliation.

Another worker (P3), although happy with his job, informed that he would like to change job and work on his own with visual arts. The same happened to P13, who, even feeling happy with his work, did not give up on the idea of changing jobs, as he mentioned that he thought about himself working at a snack bar rather than organising items within a store. About P20, her mother said: “she would prefer to work as a dancer, but it is very hard to sustain herself professionally dancing”. With these last stories, the participants presented a comprehension of what would bring them happiness; however, discrimination often denied these possibilities.

In order to continue checking how these professionals are included, we will analyse some aspects related to work productivity: How much their employers and co-workers considered them productive or useful in performing functions assigned to them.

## **PRODUCTIVITY**

Productivity at work can be seen as one of the most critical aspects of professional achievement. The idea of being productive and that the society may enjoy the production is part of these professionals inclusion. However, the requirement and this production exploitation may turn this job into an unpleasant one once this does not consider, necessarily, the workers' interests.

Regarding the workers' comprehension of their activities, 12 have shown an easy comprehension of their managers' and co-workers' instructions, four could understand with some support, and one would comprehend with much help. These data show that it is a false understanding that the Down syndrome workers have difficulties understanding the instructions for work, as long as the communication is done adequately, and this is valid for all workers, with or without mental disabilities.

About the ability to communicate and do elementary calculations, observed in the workplace, 14 participants could express themselves verbally, via gestures or written without help; the other three would do with occasional help, denoting that all the participants could communicate what they intended to do. Nine of them could not do simple calculations, two could do it with help, and two could ask for occasional help. The manager of P2 considered it more important that he would have the basic knowledge for calculations. As math is essential for some activities, it would be important to provide training that could give special attention to teaching this subject to all the workers.

Among other difficulties to be faced by these workers, their co-workers indicated the lack of computer domain, little focus and, sometimes, little empowerment. Regarding the capacities indicated by the co-workers, organisation, communication and attention were mentioned. These indicate that their productivity, and the mentioned limitations, are not so different for all the other workers.

Four of them were praised for their productivity, mainly due to their responsibility, punctuality and perfectionism. P11 was criticised for her flexibility and also for having to deal with stressful situations. P2 was described as orderly and disciplined, doing useful things. Thus, some criticism related to productivity indicated their managers' worries with the production speed: "she is thorough in her work and delivers a well-done job. Her difficulty is towards flexibility. When we have many customers to assist, she feels herself under pressure, as it requires a more rapid rhythm to perform the activities" (P11's co-worker).

He develops some useful tasks, and some others need to be redone by his colleagues, as file typing. To know how to use Word, deal with the copy machine, the paper shredder, the scissors, these he can do perfectly. Very punctual, orderly and disciplined. Considering productivity, he did not help much but has helped to change the organisational environment. (P2's colleague)

"He is very useful to the company when concerned about product finalisation, but the productivity is worse when compared to his colleagues, his rhythm is different, and I need to follow him up on his activities" (P6's manager).

P8's boss has praised his employee: "he is attentive, fulfils his role and is tidy". However, he has also expressed some criticism, as he "does not take action to deal with routine tasks". P13 was also criticised for his productivity. His co-worker mentioned that

he is productive “if we stick to his foot”, that “he is not responsible” and would fulfil his tasks only if “pressed”. Besides the previously mentioned difficulties and limitations, it was also mentioned that P13 “does not have a specific job”, which may explain his lack of action, as he would need to wait for tasks distribution. This lack of tasks clearly distributed would not mean a kind of discrimination of these workers? One of the employers confirmed that his work was very useful, mainly with the printed documents: “he is very proactive with this”.

P16’s manager mentioned that, to have production, he would need to follow her up or provide good management of her activities. When asked about P16’s responsibility at work, her boss answered that “her productivity varies, but the management makes the necessary adjustments so that she can do a good job”. Her boss also said: “her work is useful, as she provides an operational activity that is tedious for others workers but is productive as it helps with her development”. We understood her boss declaration as a clear expression of discrimination.

Regarding these workers’ inclusion, P14’s reports bring new information about the question. His boss would consider him very responsible for the company and his position. During the interview, his position was treated as a generalist, as he would accrue several activities: administrative assistance, work at the reception desk and action as the company office boy. As to his focus, his boss pointed out that when he did not have pending tasks, he would access the internet to get amused, something that would disturb his boss and his colleague, as they consider that idle, although they did not prevent him from doing that. Internet usage seems to be a recurring behaviour in modern social relationships and not something particular to Down syndrome workers. Besides, it clarifies that he did that when he had no activities to perform during the report. To determine that this behaviour would be exclusive within this workers’ group seems to be, once more, an expression of discrimination faced by these young people daily.

On the other hand, P5’s manager did not fear to compare him with other co-workers. He said that he was the one who best replied to his instructions:

his work is very useful to the company and his productivity compared to his colleagues is even better, as he delivers 100%, assumes more than others for they want to do on their own way. He does what he needs to do following the instructions received. (P5’s manager)

This “compliment” for the activity being well delivered by P5 as he acknowledges what is told to do seems to indicate that the worker had a good comprehension, was attentive and would consider the requirements and opinions of his boss. However, the report seems to indicate certain passiveness, submission in the order of acceptance. The evaluation on the Down syndrome young worker “being even better” denotes a compensation which the boss aligns with the worker’s mental disability, although not

overcoming, remaining thus as a discrimination attitude through a super valued compliment. According to Amaral (1998), if acknowledging others' significant difference (or rejection to it) causes some discomfort, stress, and anxiety, protection measures may be provided to mitigate the discomfort.

P18 was very much acclaimed by his managers. One of them said:

his work is very useful. He is considered a secret weapon, as he goes out, brings customers in, chats with them and entertains them, making these clients to want to come back. Therefore, he was moved from the branch at neighbourhood I., where he worked and moved to a new [branch] in the neighbourhood. The idea was to bring more customers as he did [at the branch] in neighbourhood I. He has been there at the new branch for 1 month already and has matched the expectations. (P18's manager)

His work was considered very important to the company, as it was requested he should help attract more clients to the new branch. Although the search for greater profits is part of the capitalist ideal, there is no way not to notice that, in this particular case, that mental disability get "spectacularisation" contours. If it is important to point out positive aspects for the inclusion of a Down syndrome worker, it must be considered that, in this case, it has turned into an "attraction", as his difference was used to, maybe, increase business earnings.

P7, P10 and P12 reports indicate the importance of activities performed by them and their communication skills: "she speaks very well in public, learns easily and is well organised. ( ... ) She is human, hugs everyone and is sweet. ( ... ) She fits because she does right everything she is asked to do" (P7's manager).

She shows communication skills, good relationship with customers, is active, has learning skills, knows how to use a computer. When she does not know, she asks and she memorises the codes very easily. ( ... ) The work she performs, besides pleasing everyone, is a very useful work, essential to all tasks development. She helps her colleagues and also helps to organise the carts with material which the customers will use. (P10's co-worker)

She can focus on her work and is very nice. She has personal initiative and works with everyone. She is sharp, constant, hygienic, nice. Apart from her difficulties, she is more professional than others who work here. When we have meetings, she is invited and gives important reports, [claiming for] more rest time and packers. (P12's colleague)

These workers' contributions seem to be well evaluated by their co-workers, their managers, and the participants themselves.

As to the Down syndrome workers' productivity, it could be noticed that a meaningful part of the barriers is related to the behaviour of some managers, colleagues and customers. Even though none of them has declared clearly to be against the professional activity of these workers, it can be noticed in their conducts and actions, such as no instruction towards activities to be performed, tasks isolated from customers' space and unnecessary protection. In any case, it is worth reflecting on how well companies are prepared to welcome these workers. The collected data points in another direction: workers were expected to adapt to the rationality of work, but no apparent efforts were observed on employers and colleagues to adapt their own work environment to include them better. It is worth emphasising, to bring this discussion closer to those referring to inclusive education, that integration is different from inclusion, as the latter recognises the need for institutions to change themselves to create similar conditions to improve the general cultural mood (Booth & Ainscow, 2011).

### **SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS IN THE WORKPLACE**

We will present data collected from the interviews and observations about the Down syndrome workers' social relationships with their managers, co-workers and customers.

According to most of these workers' colleagues, they were not treated differently. There were actions to protect some privileges, such as giving some time off or making schedules more flexible when it happened. These actions could generate harassment as well as hard feelings from other colleagues. When favouring a Down syndrome worker at the expense of other workers, these actions can be considered "positive" discrimination (Amaral, 1998).

When referring to friendship at the workplace, 14 participants thought to have friends as the other four mentioned that, besides being treated very affectionately, they were considered colleagues, not friends, as they did not meet after working hours. The participants tended to be treated the same way as other colleagues in the workplace, with reports of fellowship and sympathy. Some reports mentioned that they were invited and attended the get-together parties. However, the fellowship relationships were generally restricted to the workplace, as they were not invited to tours or parties outside the workplace.

As to the relationships between customers and these workers, it could be noticed, in general, that they could establish friendly relationships. Some companies were well evaluated by the clients just because they hired these workers.

As to colleagues' opinion about customers and suppliers mentioned about these Down syndrome workers, there are some reports to highlight: "people think this is super normal, as part of the company, just like all other employees" (P1's manager); "clients think interesting" (P9's co-worker); "the customer's relationship is good. Some clients congratulate them for his work and the company's action" (P14's manager).

However, some reports showed that some clients felt discomfort with their presence at the workplace and did not like to be served by them, expressing clear discrimination.

The companies' dependence on the whims of their customers seems to justify the peripheral inclusion of workers with Down syndrome. It is worth mentioning that 12 of them did not interact directly with clients, being very incidental, as expressed below: "he stays more at the storage, does not talk much, but he is polite and welcomes the clients" (P6's co-worker); "she does have much interaction with externals, but I know some are not receptive" (P16's manager).

From these two speeches, the interviewees mentioned the little interaction with the clients when they pointed out that those two workers worked at the shop storage. It should be noted that these workplaces were usually chosen by their employers and not chosen by themselves. In general, it is the employers' responsibility to define the workplace, as this is not the employee's choice. However, the collected data denote repeated situations where these workers with Down syndrome are set apart from customers' view, which brings out questions if these would not be segregation expressions of these young professionals in the workplace.

Considering the responsiveness of these employees' interaction with clients, some employers said the following: "we have received personal feedback and also reports and comments on social networks with very positive reviews from the place. Customers love her. Customers praise her, say she is attentive, polite, kind and very helpful" (P11's manager and associate).

There was never a direct expression about this subject, but the employee's reaction was very good. There was never glances or postures with non-acceptance or dissatisfaction. He is more at ease, articulate, with more action to things in general. He made new friends, enriched his vocabulary in contact with colleagues and customers. (P18's employer)

She is very important to the store, for being productive and makes the difference in the store, is attentive and kind to all customers, distinguishes herself from others on the same position. If I need to pay overtime, I prefer to do it for P12. Some clients do not like her while others love her job and her way of working. Those who like her call her by name. (P12's manager)

This good customers' responsiveness shows an important aspect for these workers' inclusion in the work environment and society. That is why it is important not to prevent these workers from establishing relationships with their colleagues and other people at the workplace. When analysing the hiring of people with mental disabilities, some papers (Ávila-Vitor & Carvalho-Freitas, 2012; Carvalho-Freitas, 2012) sustain the corporate brand and the company's environment as essential elements related to the benefits of hiring, as both employees and customers appreciate this conduct. Participant P12 describes his meaning to this corporate brand: "the work is very important at the company because everybody helps. The boss has spoken good things about my job. When I stay home, all customers look for me".

The worker has understood as a positive experience his inclusion in work, felt happy for being part of a whole, realised his importance to the company because “all customers” searched for him.

## CLOSING REMARKS

Living with mentally disabled people, as well as all other disabilities, cultures, genders, ages, skin colour, in appropriate conditions, that is, with mutual cooperation, constant, pleasant, and confronting concepts – the worth of humankind no matter what we are at each historical time –, even not avoiding the absence of criticism and our need to become rational, peaceful and affectionate, these are necessary conditions for an inclusive society. (Crochick, 2019, p. 130)

The professional inclusion of workers with Down syndrome denotes the discrepancy of work conditions (often precarious) for all workers. We found out the fear of social exclusion, unemployment, and meaningless life among this research data. It was also observed a lack of recognition of skills and capabilities of these workers. The impossibility of self-determination in the face of the imposition for being productive was observed at different times during this research, although this definition affects any other worker.

This research also disclosed essential issues over the possibilities of including workers with Down syndrome and guiding better conditions for these professionals. It can point ways of facing different prejudiced expressions towards them, such as discrimination, marginalisation, and segregation.

Among retrograde issues still prevailing, we highlight discrimination on daily processes, where these workers were considered slow or unable to perform their activities. We had also identified segregation moments where these workers were set apart from clients' contact or not invited to participate in parties or meetings with their colleagues outside the workplace. They were also marginalised, above all, when they performed unnecessary tasks, set aside the activities required to the group of all other workers. On the other hand, there were some moments in which they were judged very positively by their colleagues, managers and customers, situations that point out to inclusive processes, fellowship and capability recognition of these workers to carry out activities designed to them. In the last case, the contact hypothesis has some positive aspects (Allport, 1958). However, it is worth saying that setting the prejudice target only on the different social institutions, not considering their work should be to facilitate inclusion, is not, by itself, enough to improve the general cultural environment. This perspective aims to create social conditions favourable to the community between the prejudice targets — in this case, the workers with Down syndrome — and all other people within all social classes, mainly within the institutions, like the school and the labour market. This contact

facilitates the formation of identifying processes that will deconstruct the arising negative idealisations, in general, from the lack of experience with the targets as common victims of prejudice expressions in this culture. Workers with Down syndrome, just like other people, have dreams, seek to be happy and have the right to live with their fellows in all social areas.

We understand that it is necessary to initiate all efforts so that workers with Down syndrome, and all other workers with some disability, be included in all areas of human coexistence. The fight for the emancipation of all workers in so many processes of exploitation and reification which distinguishes modern social life cannot avoid considering, even contradictorily, the fight for inclusion of all workers, since, in this managed world, to get hired is the primary condition for group and personal life maintenance. As mentioned, the possibility of a freedom glimpse, in the middle of the social domination, allows us to reconcile with the human touch, pointing to the realisation of a full life that should be already possible to everyone.

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