

The effects of women's double working hours on professional nursing practice

Os efeitos da dupla jornada de trabalho das mulheres na prática profissional de enfermagem

Los efectos de la doble jornada laboral de las mujere en la práctica profesional de la enfermería

Received: 08/14/2024 | Revised: 08/26/2024 | Accepted: 08/27/2024 | Published: 08/30/2024

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Abstract

Objective: Reflect on the double working day of female nurses and its consequences for professional practice. **Methodology:** This is a theoretical and reflective study based on the theoretical perspective of the sociology of work, together with the theoretical references of Simone de Beauvoir and Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. A narrative review of the literature was carried out in a non-systematic way in order to establish relationships between the theoretical framework selected and current issues in nursing, as well as women's experiences. **Results:** The logical-reflective exposition is anchored in three fundamental aspects: the working nurse; the double working day and the health of working nurses. It's not possible to look at women only as workers, since their biological reality is closely linked to their social representation. This implies the need to investigate how the social construction of women directly interferes with their lives in an integral way. Such reflection can contribute to valuing nursing work, as well as fostering discussion about the social role of women. **Conclusion:** This reflection needs to be present in society as a whole, not just in the context of nursing, so that women's demands, which have been evident throughout history, can be noted.

Keywords: Philosophy; Nursing; Work hours; History; Gender Equity.

Resumo

Objetivo: Refletir sobre a dupla jornada de trabalho das enfermeiras e suas consequências para a prática profissional. **Metodologia:** Trata-se de um estudo teórico-reflexivo baseado na perspectiva teórica da sociologia do trabalho, juntamente com os referenciais teóricos de Simone de Beauvoir e Karl Marx e Friedrich Engels. Foi realizada uma revisão narrativa da literatura de forma não sistemática, a fim de estabelecer relações entre a estrutura teórica selecionada e as questões atuais da enfermagem, bem como as experiências das mulheres. **Resultados:** A exposição lógico-reflexiva está ancorada em três aspectos fundamentais: a enfermeira que trabalha; a dupla jornada de trabalho e a saúde das enfermeiras que trabalham. Não é possível olhar para as mulheres apenas como trabalhadoras, pois sua realidade biológica está intimamente ligada à sua representação social. Isso implica a necessidade de investigar como a construção social da mulher interfere diretamente em sua vida de forma integral. Essa reflexão pode contribuir para a valorização do trabalho da enfermagem, bem como fomentar a discussão sobre o papel social da mulher. **Conclusão:**

Essa reflexão precisa estar presente na sociedade como um todo, não apenas no contexto da enfermagem, para que as demandas femininas, evidenciadas ao longo da história, possam ser notadas.

Palavras-chave: Filosofia; Enfermagem; Jornada de trabalho; História; Equidade de gênero.

Resumen

Objetivo: Reflexionar sobre la doble jornada laboral de las enfermeras y sus consecuencias en la práctica profesional. **Metodología:** Se trata de un estudio teórico y reflexivo basado en la perspectiva teórica de la sociología del trabajo, junto con las referencias teóricas de Simone de Beauvoir y Karl Marx y Friedrich Engels. Se realizó una revisión narrativa de la literatura de forma no sistemática con el fin de establecer relaciones entre el marco teórico seleccionado y la problemática actual de la enfermería, así como las experiencias de las mujeres. **Resultados:** La exposición lógico-reflexiva se ancla en tres aspectos fundamentales: la enfermera trabajadora; la doble jornada y la salud de las enfermeras trabajadoras. No es posible considerar a la mujer sólo como trabajadora, porque su realidad biológica está estrechamente ligada a su representación social. Esto implica la necesidad de investigar cómo la construcción social de la mujer interfiere directamente en su vida de forma integral. Esta reflexión puede contribuir a la valorización del trabajo de enfermería, así como fomentar el debate sobre el papel social de la mujer. **Conclusión:** Es necesario que esta reflexión esté presente en el conjunto de la sociedad, no sólo en el contexto de la enfermería, para que se reconozcan las reivindicaciones de las mujeres, que han sido evidentes a lo largo de la historia.

Palabras clave: Filosofía; Enfermería; Horarios de trabajo; Historia; Equidad de género.

1. Introduction

The status of women in society is widely discussed in world literature, and several scholars have looked at this issue over the years. Nursing, as a profession made up of a mostly female workforce, should not shy away from such discussions. It is also relevant for the scope of nursing to reflect on working conditions and how they are integrated with the current economic regime.

The working day is understood by Marx (1866) as a variable quantity, represented not only by the working time required for the continuous reproduction of the worker, but also by the extra work. Therefore, it can be understood that the working day is the time during which the worker puts his labor power at the service of his employer.

Historically, the social role of women has been closely linked to domestic tasks. Engels (1884) attributes the institution of private property to the emergence of the patriarchal family, in which women became subjugated to men and were servants in the home.

The context of the industrial revolution led to the participation of women in the labor market, strengthening feminist demands. However, in this context, the dissatisfaction of the bourgeoisie is notable, as it demands the presence of women in the home and sees their participation in the labor market as dangerous competition (Beauvoir, 1949).

According to the writings of Marx (1866), the entry of women into the labor market can be linked to the advent of machinery. With the advent of machinery, physical strength became secondary and characteristics such as low muscle strength, immature body development and more flexible limbs were sought, culminating in the growth of female and child labor. This also served to increase the number of wage earners in order to generate greater production for employers (Dias, 2023).

However, although women's participation in the labor market has grown since the 18th century, there has been no increase in male participation in domestic care. This context subjects women to a double working day, culminating in an overload (Nascimento, 2015).

In the context of nursing, there has historically been a strong association between women and the practice of care. In this way, the history of nursing is associated with the history of the woman who provides care. There are also different stages in the ways in which the practice of care is identified. At the beginning of the 20th century, the woman providing care ceased to be the consecrated woman and became the woman-nurse (Colliere, 1999).

Thus, the practice of nursing is strongly permeated by gender issues. It is common for nursing professionals to work a double shift, combining one or more jobs with caring for the home and family. Therefore, this context weakens the

participation of the category in labor struggles, which corroborates the maintenance of precarious working conditions (Dias et al., 2019).

That said, it is essential to reflect on the role of women in the context of the nursing labor market, as well as the repercussions of the social roles they play. This study therefore aims to reflect on the double working hours of nurses and their impact on professional practice.

2. Methodology

This is a theoretical-reflexive study based on the theoretical perspective of the sociology of work and Beauvoir's feminist theory, which will address the consequences of women's double working hours on the professional practice of female nursing workers. To this end, the historical process of the construction of the working nurse, the multiple working hours of women nurses and the responsibility and blame of women nurses for the quality of care were considered relevant.

This manuscript was constructed using the theoretical references of Simone de Beauvoir in her book *The Second Sex* and Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in *The Manifesto of the Communist Party*. The writings of Marx and Engels (1848) were used to understand labor relations in the context of capitalist society, such as the understanding of class struggle. The writings of Beauvoir (1949) were used to consider the historical construction of the role of women, as well as the construction of the collective imaginary of the concept of being a woman.

To compose the manuscript, a narrative literature review was also carried out. This review was carried out in a non-systematic way using uncontrolled descriptors in order to establish relationships between the selected theoretical framework and current issues in nursing work, as well as women's experiences. Therefore, studies were selected that could be related to the topic and that followed a current time period from 2018 to 2023.

3. Results and Discussion

The logical-reflective exposition is anchored in three fundamental aspects: the working nurse; the double working day and the health of working nurses.

3.1 The nurse female worker

First of all, in order to reflect on the role of women as workers, it is necessary to examine what it means to be a woman. To do this, we will refer to the theoretical framework of Beauvoir (1949). In this way, we can understand that women, in a patriarchal context, are a social product. It is also understood that, in this society, man represents "the absolute", while woman represents "the other". Therefore, a woman is what the man, in his position, decides she is. In this way, it is defined:

"No one is born a woman: they become one. No biological, psychic or economic destiny defines the form that the human female assumes within society; it is the whole of civilization that elaborates this intermediate product between the male and the castrated, which they call feminine." (Beauvoir, 1949, p. 290)

In this excerpt, Beauvoir (1949) explains her understanding in such a way as to differentiate between the concepts of female and woman. Therefore, it is not possible to understand women solely as a social product, since their domination is linked to their biological destiny. In this same debate, when examining the condition of women in society, it should be noted that men and women, since the rise of patriarchy, have constituted distinct castes, and have never been on fully equal terms. Men are offered higher salaries and more politically advantageous positions, which consequently maintain their sovereignty (Beauvoir, 2014).

With the entry of women into the labor market, they have to be seen as workers, since, like men, they also have to sell their labor. However, it is not possible to deduce the oppression of women solely from the emergence of private property.

Beauvoir (1949) criticizes the materialist view that reduces men and women to just economic entities. In a way, women's biological capacity, as well as their labor, is important in the social economy. Even in societies built on socialism, it is not possible to dissociate the reproductive function historically linked to the social construction of women.

When reflecting on women's reproductive capacity and their role in society, it is possible to see that although women's social role seems to have evolved, the state still exercises, in many cases, extensive power over women's choices about their own bodies.

An example of this is the Brazilian legislation on the right to legal abortion and surgical sterilization. With regard to abortion, a woman who causes an abortion herself, or allows a third party to cause an abortion, is punished with imprisonment of one to three years. Surgical sterilization, on the other hand, prior to the enactment of Law 14.443/2022, required the express authorization of both spouses, when the marriage was in force (Brazil, 2022).

These findings corroborate the position of Beauvoir (1949), who considers that, if it is impossible to force women to give birth, measures are put in place that make motherhood the only way out, restricting access to abortion and socially instituting marriage.

It is therefore understood that working women are subject to the same economic regime as men, and are therefore part of the proletariat. However, it is noteworthy that, because of the social role assigned to women, they not only sell their labor power to an employer, but also do domestic work, which is unpaid work.

Throughout history, the social construction of nursing has shaped it as an act of charity in the popular imagination, obscuring its nature as a scientific discipline. This misconception, rooted in historical roots, masks the complex web of elements that make it up as a discipline.

With regard to the issue of the double working day, it is possible to see that, because women have historically been encouraged to fulfill the predetermined role of caregivers and mothers, they are divided between a working day and a day in which they dedicate themselves to caring for their children and home. This issue is widely present in the context of nursing, since the professional body is mostly made up of women.

3.2 The double working day and the health of working women nurses

When you consider the writings of Marx (1886), you can see that the working day is divided into two distinct moments. Necessary working time is understood as the period in which the worker produces the value of their labor power. Surplus working time, in turn, is the period of the working day in which surplus value is generated.

Still from a Marxist perspective, three constituent moments of the work process are described, namely: The activity oriented towards an end, representing the work itself; the object, understood as the matter on which the transforming action is applied; and the means, these being the tools of which the workers make use (Marx, 1886).

These concepts can be applied to nursing work insofar as it is considered that the transformative action of nursing is applied, in the context of care, to the subjects who are subjected to nursing care and who therefore constitute the object. The means, in turn, can be represented by the most diverse instruments used in practice, such as the techniques and knowledge of professionals.

It is also important to consider that the product of nursing work is not tangible, it is not a visible good. However, care is a product that is consumed while it is being provided, making nursing work somewhat invisible. As far as work is concerned, it is well known that it can be a factor in emotional and psychological exhaustion, contributing to the generation of

stress. Physical stress, resulting from an excessive work routine, is capable of causing different emotional impacts (Lima da Silva et al., 2013).

Dias et al. (2019) demonstrate that issues related to the work environment, such as the intensification of working hours, the deterioration of working conditions and the accumulation of employment relationships, can have harmful effects on the physical and psychological health of workers.

The responsibility and overload imposed on professionals who combine working hours can lead to a number of harmful consequences for physical and mental health. Sleep deprivation, poor diet and impaired social life are just a few examples. In addition, this context acts as an impediment to the adoption of healthy behaviors, making it difficult to maintain a healthy life (Soares et. al, 2021; Pereira, 2022).

As discussed above, the particularities of women's experiences in capitalist society prevent women workers from being considered solely as part of the proletariat. It is possible to understand the impacts that work and social impositions have on women's health (Nascimento, 2022; Atay 2021).

The context of women's social role is therefore considered when we look at the responsibility given to women in terms of caring for the home. It can be understood that the accumulation of employment relationships, combined with the accumulation of other different demands, such as domestic work, end up taking up a large part of their time. The time needed to perform these roles can lead to these workers neglecting their health (Barros, 2021; Pereira, 2022).

3.3 The double working day and its impact on the quality of nursing care

When we look at labor relations from the perspective of Marx and Engels (1848), we see that the class struggle has been present throughout the history of societies. Proletarians and the bourgeoisie thus constitute distinct classes that establish a relationship of exploitation.

In nursing, this relationship is also true: although nurses may be in a hierarchically superior position within the nursing team, they also sell their labor power. For this reason, they belong to the exploited class, they are part of the proletariat. Antagonistically, the nurse governs the workforce of the other professionals in the team, in order to represent the interests of her employer (Leal; Melo, 2018).

As discussed above, nursing care culminates in a product that is consumed while it is being provided. Because of this invisibility, we can also see that low salaries and little social recognition sometimes lead nursing workers to combine more than one employment relationship, which is also associated with domestic work (Atay, 2021).

It is clear that political struggles are of the utmost importance in guaranteeing a favorable working environment. However, different reasons can be considered as hindering the inclusion of nursing professionals in the political struggle. Among them, the association of work with domestic work is capable of affecting the political mobilization of these nurses. The time spent reconciling all these demands ends up weakening the political struggle, since it makes it impossible for these women to participate in labor struggles. (Dias et al., 2019)

In addition to the depoliticization of the professional class, the aforementioned context can also lead to unsatisfactory performance in professional activities. An excessive workload, as discussed above, can lead to consequences such as sleep deprivation or physical exhaustion, which can lead to a reduction in the quality of the work provided.

The study by Soares et al. (2021) suggests that changes in the ideal sleep pattern can induce automated and distracted behaviors, as well as psychological stress experienced by nurses, combined with the physical effort of the job can generate lapses related to sleep and memory, which can compromise the quality of care provided. Therefore, no matter how hard professionals try to develop good practices, the risks of human failure are high (Celestino, 2020; Schultz, 2022).

It is also possible to draw a parallel between the excessive workload caused by multiple employment relationships and the time needed for women, as caretakers of the home, to carry out domestic activities. Thus, when we look at domestic work as unpaid work, we see that these consequences can also fall on these women (Cattani, 2021).

Thus, it can be seen that the repercussions mentioned above can apply not only to professionals who perform strenuous duties in the context of multiple jobs, but also to those who work double shifts consisting of paid work and domestic work.

4. Conclusion

For researchers, it is not possible to look at women only as workers, since their biological reality is closely linked to their social representation. This implies the need to investigate how the social construction of women impacts on the most different areas of their lives.

This theoretical reflection has shown that society, once dominated by men, keeps women responsible for looking after the home. Antagonistically, women are expected to assume not only a complacent position, but also a working role. Trying to meet all the socially imposed demands, women end up overburdened.

As far as the reality of nursing is concerned, most of the professional body is made up of women. When we look back at the history of the profession, its association with the benevolent care expected of women is remarkable. This historical context is relevant today and is embedded in the popular imagination, albeit in a veiled form. Thus, the burden of a double working day, combining one or more employment relationships with unpaid domestic care work, can have detrimental effects on both the health of female workers and the quality of care.

It is therefore of the utmost importance that we continue to reflect on these aspects, as this debate can contribute to valuing nursing work, as well as fostering discussion about the social role of women. It is therefore necessary for this debate to be present in society as a whole, not just in the world of nursing, so that women's demands, which have been evident throughout history and in various world scenarios, can be noted. This study therefore makes a contribution to this discussion through its reflective nature, which may contribute to future studies on this subject.

Conflict of Interest

The authors have no conflicts of interest.

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