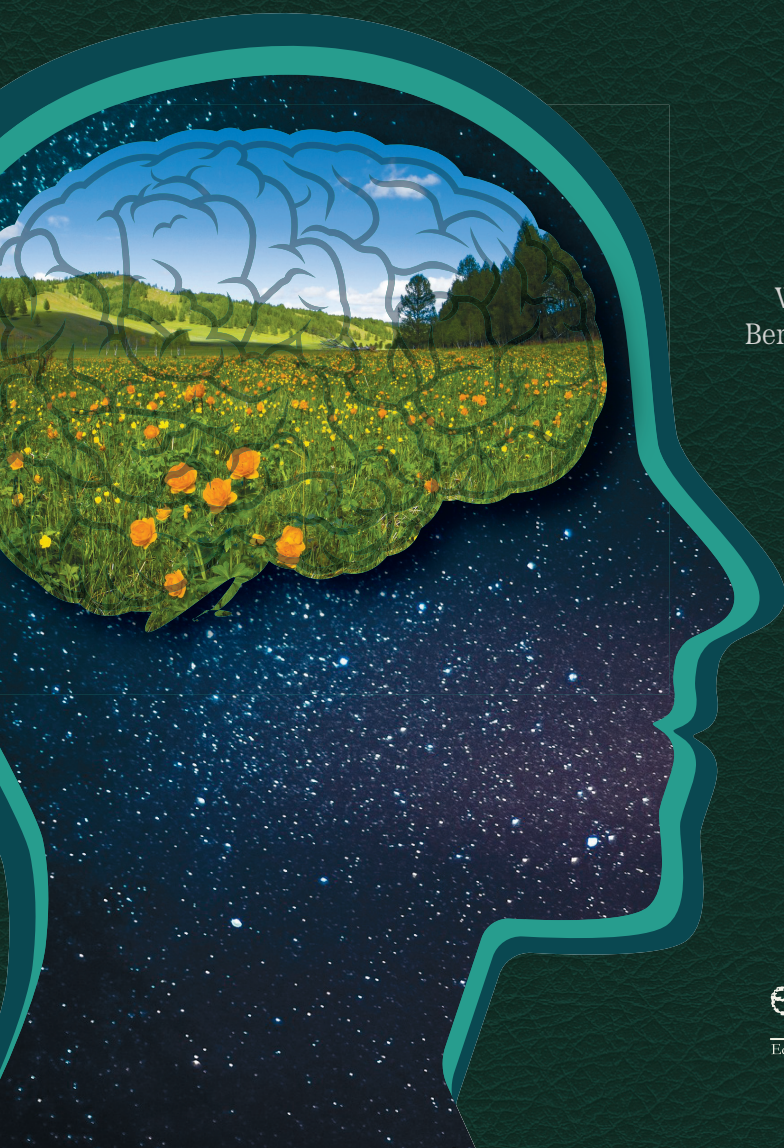


# Quality of life

education, health, work and society



Welton Cardoso Júnior  
Berta Leni Costa Cardoso  
Claudio Pinto Nunes



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Silvana Aparecida Carvalho do Prado



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We dedicate this book to those who experience the tensions of studying and/or working on site or remotely and feel overwhelmed by their tasks. Their drives, determined by the market demands, have modified their essence, their natural features, and their life ideals. It is an opportunity to unveil, raise awareness and subvert such logic, demystifying it in relation to the global productivity control system. The reading proposes cure through Education, through Health education, through awareness of the meaning of Work and broad sustainability of globalized life in Society.



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*Claudio Pinto Nunes*



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# Introduction

When acquiring this book, the reader interested in the theme, *per se*, reveals a search for answers to questions they have asked or might be asking about individual or collective phenomena that provide, keep, or disturb their quality of life. Whether from a humanitarian perspective, or otherwise, a holistic humankind perception, those reading it are already the target of the authors' gratitude for this opportunity of contributing in a motivated way.

This work entails the importance of the Quality of Life (QoL) theme by means of multidisciplinary analyses of research developed in Brazil and abroad, as well as other scientific documents produced aiming to gather them in the light of a broadening and deepening perspective.

It represents the search for centralization of the thematic understanding mitigated by several areas of knowledge, which raises great concern currently. Because this theme has become a study object recently required by the Education area and already investigated by the Health area for some time, it is broadened in this reading.

Here, the theme is associated with work sociology and with behaviors in society in its historical moments, without losing the holistic view. Thus, this text's first aim is to resize the understanding of human life and its features, valuing it in its needed completeness, and its most diverse representation aspects. To achieve such aim, we address four categories developed as four chapters in this book.

Therefore, the Quality of Life (QoL) theme is presented in four chapters merely to organize the reading since the theme has its dimensions and relationships intensely entangled, its parts compose the whole and the whole needs each part.

In the first chapter, a theoretical, philosophical and sociological framework, which reveals its centrality in the Education area since its major intent is the construction of the human identity to be pursued by a group of people or a nation.

Knowledge is challenged in this perspective, thus recognizing that no construction can be more important in the individuals' education than their perception of themselves in the world and time they live. Education here also promotes freedom regarding the awareness of different existing qualities of life. This has a central relevance in this work, and it is the starting point from where the whole proposal is developed.

The second chapter provides some reading addressing Health issues, welfare elements, and indicators, lifestyles, illnesses that are directly related to quality of life or lack of it.

In the third chapter, we address the theme in relation to work issues, which as stated before, are intertwined since inevitably in a world of productivism, market rules, and capitalism, such productivism cannot be dissociated of these issues. Therefore, it is by means of these relationships that we stretch the theme towards its universality.

We will observe how the impacts of globalization and new technologies will be more challenging in the construction of careers that can enjoy life with the desired quality along with gender issues that influence it.

Finally, the fourth chapter of this book presents discussions regarding the human life social dimension related to the meaning of quality of life and which, in fact, result from complementary discussions that preceded it. It is also a suggestion to the debate about culture, leisure, and spirituality for the individual's quality of life and about the sustainability issue for the planet's quality of life.

With the authors' experience acquired in their life trajectories, research, and studies, this book draws attention to the importance of centralizing the theme of quality of life in schools. A subject dedicated to the theme in elementary education should be the basis in the construction of a citizen's awareness of a fair and fraternal society. This analysis should be renewed and resumed in all university and professional courses as well.

Without deepening the theme specificities and internal relations, this work is only the first movement of the authors' small

steps towards the understanding of the influences we are all exposed to within a universal economic system, in a bold proposal of a first path to the conceptual convergence of the theme.

This is a sustained view for the re-elaboration of new tools to measure this relevant parameter called quality of life and, thus, build up the power of confirming it or changing it in the face of a conscious individual and collective determination. The intent here is to provide an introduction to a more intense journey considering all the possibilities motivated by this project. This is not only about the authors, or the academia, but also regards the counter-hegemonic demand needed to react to the evidence of failure of the so-called National Capitalist Welfare States (Macpherson, 1977).

The capitalist economic system from its origin to the current time only deepens relationships of managerialism and accountability in the lives of most people (those who need to sell their physical and/or mental force as a counterpart) and, which by means of creative and reinvented liberalities, incessantly presents itself as unique and necessary.



# CHAPTER I

## Quality of Life (QoL) and Education

Since the first existing registers, human beings tend to propose logic or impose fabricated truths to explain all phenomena and processes they perceive through their senses or cognition. Weighing life meanings and nuances, seeking to understand and manipulate them, the humankind goes on in a never-ending dispute with the single absolutely unquestionable truth, the undesired final term of our material existence.

And therefore, in this escape, human beings build up their castles *a priori*<sup>1</sup>, symbolic and synallagmatic, supported by sciences, religions, arts, or philosophy, or even in a combination of these manifestations. Power, control and reproduction mechanisms that are not exhausted in queries or in definite solutions continue to exist permeated by their conflicts and contradictions.

Science, among other human constructions, differs for seeking a universal understanding based on concepts, methods and techniques which, in a coherent and controlled manner, establishes its results by principles, without ignoring that historical evolutions might transmute.

In Education Science, when the protagonists reach the awareness of social constructive relevance, along with the challenges of teaching, they take over a place of speech originated in a worldview that entails the holistic and interdisciplinary understanding of the phenomena inherent in human life. They demand of themselves such coherence, and thus, necessarily seek to enter the fields of

---

1 The term *a priori* originates from Latin and means “before the experience” (Kant, 2001). It was coined by Immanuel Kant, one of the most influent philosophers in history. For Kant, *a priori* knowledge is the kind of knowledge that does not prove observation or experimentation but is rather based on reasoning and logic.

intervention of public policies and all issues unlimitedly, because they are the true builders of society projects.

For this reason, safety enough to dialogue in the classroom cannot be obtained only in elementary education, this must occur in undergraduate and graduate courses aiming at knowledge advancement. Continuous improvement of the education process is necessary.

As emphasized, owning professional tools is not enough to build up knowledge, much more is required. It is fundamental to enter the indispensable universe of owned science, knowing its intrinsic meaning and its evolution, getting involved with its demands and, therefore, belonging to it.

Thus, the education activity is developed through the articulation of many organizational elements that aim to meet society requirements favoring its sustainable evolution (Bispo; Santos Junior, 2014) and teachers are the human element that must mediate such activity.

However, it was not always understood in this way. In Classical Antiquity, mainly in Greek and Roman cities, high level schools existed to refine the existing knowledge in the medicine, philosophy, rhetoric, and law areas.

The teacher was the unequivocal figure in the process, or the knowledge source and the disciples would gather around the master, whose considerable knowledge baggage was transmitted [...]. That is why, at those times, there was a community of disciples surrounding a master, a type of head of school (Luckesi; Barreto, 2012, p. 30, our translation).

In the Middle Ages, through the Catholic Church, in addition to being a moderator, the teacher was also the one guaranteeing the orthodoxy of ideas and possible conclusions.

Therefore, in one way or another, we can see that teachers were always surrounded by a wide variety of attributions, responsibilities, and possibilities demanded, expected and allowed to them. From this historical condition, we understand that Education is essential in societies and the teachers' role is the permanent exercise of critical

logic. In other words, the insertion of education sciences goes beyond the teaching-learning process only to configure professionals that act in different areas of human knowledge.

Teachers must be able to prepare students to be excellent observers and investigators, curious students, creative and reflective beings. They need to alter deeply their roles, becoming actors of their own education process rather than spectators (Bispo; Santos Junior, 2014).

In agreement with this parallel, in general what has been occurring is that Education remains in the center of knowledge and culture creation and dissemination. By means of its free and indispensable autonomy, it can question and investigate problems, as well as provide possible solutions to the questions appearing in chronology with existential dilemmas and human needs of each society or the planet.

Economic, political, legal, health, gender, class, ethnicity, minority, culture, spirituality, sustainability issues and many others, that matter in society, must be appropriated by Education at its different levels. Being subject to the debate of ideas and the exercise of respect and reasoning is like the shield and sword that Education science must always wield.

Correia and Carvalho (2012), in *Práxis educativa: tempo, pensamento e sociedade* [Education Praxis: time, thought, and society] asked teachers about how the present life can be realized. Their report emphasizes the need for more humanism in education, less “bank” education. Those authors proposed a reaction to the teaching-learning process that prepares for alienated work only. They highlighted the need to give new meanings to memory so that we are freed from the destiny of repeating a time already lived, Libermann (2014) emphasizes the importance of transformation of the psychic apparatus against structures in society that impoverish human qualities intentionally.

In Brazil, higher education was implemented following the professional French-Napoleonic model, which still today

determines privileges for the mastering of professional knowledge and experience as the most important requirements.

Although education institutions have seen some advancement in the last few decades due to some changes, in fact, these requirements remain the same since they are still related to mastering content rather than developing reflections. According to Guimarães (2006, p. 135), “teachers must develop, interpret and carry out education in articulation with social, political and cultural objectives. However, such action necessarily implies the understanding to its importance and the relevance of the institutionalized spaces where their work is developed.

Taking that into account, Pimenta and Anastasiou (2002) pointed out that to advance in the teaching and professional development process based on pedagogical preparation, these professionals cannot separate them from the individuals’ personal development processes, and one cannot think about personal development without thinking about the conditions they have to play their social transformer task fully and satisfactorily.

Discussing quality of life and researching it is a hard task, not only for the diversity of approaches or the absence of conceptual consensus, but also for being highly subjective. In this book we support analyses, discussions about the theme, and at the same time, provide some foundation so that this discourse is included in classrooms, in education fields, and so that it is appropriated by Education. We introduce dialogues with authors in this area of knowledge that consider historical roots and try to create an approach systematized by domains of this theme and related objects. They reveal the nuances produced or emphasized throughout history and explain the high degree of need of embodying this discourse about quality of life in the context of globalized relationships. Every reality reading process must be continuously questioned in education, research, and outreach environments. This is how all the tensions addressed in this chapter are thought, always based on a continuous enquiring and challenging logic.

For keeping this in mind, we understand that there is an economic strategy in the capitalist system, operating to promote hegemony on educational events, thus directing them to supply the productivity perspective of some job markets in detriment of human desires. Undoubtedly, due to its topicality and relevance, the theme of the quality of human life is so important in Education. The results of such absorption can determine awareness by the creation of public policies and awaken individuals to a more accurate perception of the public opinion about the importance of this element of central existence and real meaning for society.

The reflections upon individuals that form a collectivity must include this main meaning, that is, broad education of contemporary society and the legitimate welfare of future generations. A scientific educational view to the quality of life phenomenon might produce broad and sustainable results and promote the concepts of justice, equality, freedom, and brotherhood. Montenegro, Barbosa and Alcoforado (2019) highlighted that we affect others and are affected by them, for this reason, the need to educate our peers with responsibility regarding the world in its holistic view.

The following chapters are dedicated to exploring the bases of philosophical-sociological knowledge about the theme and propose a scientific method of analysis of the reality so that educators and learners can embrace the phenomenon called quality of life.

## **1.1 Epistemology, discourse, theories and approaches to Quality of Life**

Etymologically, from Greek terms episteme means knowledge and logos means study, that is, epistemology is the study to find necessary and sufficient conditions to determine some specific knowledge. It is also known as Theory of Knowledge, a philosophy branch that studies how human beings or sciences acquire and justify their knowledge (Tesser, 1994).

If in Platonism (IV a.C.) knowledge was seen as innate, in modern times, according to Jean Piaget (1990), knowledge is produced from an interaction between individuals and their

environment and according to structures that are part of those individuals, while Vigotsky (1987) reported that knowledge is acquired in an essentially socio-historical-cultural process. The latter is what we propose in this work, in which knowledge is formed externally to the individual who internalizes it.

Such internalization is guided by laws that to be deciphered require a suitable scientific method, explaining the phenomenon or, at least, understanding it in a valid way, that is, something universally accepted. This occurs because among the human constructions, science might not have a single way, but it must have a way.

Therefore, any superficial observer seeking to know what Quality of Life is (QoL) might think immediately of several factors related to it. In general, in an ordinary and chaotic way, somebody could think of elements such as pleasure, health, energy, satisfaction, long living, completeness, or even place it in family relationships, work, leisure, religion, or social life, for instance.

At first sight, this is a type of understanding that varies from person to person and that, for this reason, could also change throughout a person's life, and also depend on the culture the individual is inserted in and the meanings they ascribe to it. According to Mário bunge (1997), the epistemology usefulness is related to bringing about philosophical principles as investigation methods and the explanation of a concept within certain reality. In the latter, if we think that the quality of life of individuals changes throughout their lives, we can immediately assume that there is a fixed characteristic of this theme that is historicity. It might not be difficult to think about a material relationship for this category since it seems to be associated with economic factors as determiners. For example, we could imagine that leisure and doing sports quite often depend on the time available and private equipment.

Well, adopting this epistemological line, the quality-of-life theme is challenged by the knowledge produced so far. In our understanding such tension is linked by a nuclear relationship between capital and education, health, work, and society. In other words, this refers to the issues related to the individuals' earnings.

Therefore, one might easily notice that materialism also seems to be a basic factor when thinking about quality of life alongside historicism, which is easily noticed. In a continued effort to distance this reflection from common sense, and diving deeply into the abstraction of countless concepts elaborated for the quality-of-life phenomenon, we might verify diverse antagonist or synergistic positionings towards it. This is a clear sign that there is an implicit dialectic regarding the theme which must be used in the interpretation of its categories.

If these three components, namely, Historicity, Materiality, and Dialectic emerge in the discussions about the theme, when brought about in an epistemological approach, they reveal that there is an analysis method for the phenomenon. If such emergence occurs due to the understanding of the existence of a hegemonic movement determining the whole phenomenon, then, the dialectical-historical materialism (HDM) is suitable to study the individuals' quality of life. This analysis method will be addressed and suggested in the following topic. However, if we agree that there is an economic relation ruling the theme of the individuals' quality of life, with due consent, we also recognize that there is a power discourse inherent in the theme, and thus, advance with the necessary and honest awareness that there is always a subjective conflict to be stated. Ferreira (2019) pointed out that for the post-structuralist philosopher Michel Foucault, the production and maintenance of a discourse serve power operationalization. Discourse, for him, is the result of a power relation that is defined by a set of commonly formed rules and presents a mark originating from an institutional authority. Also, according to that author, Foucault taught that "the one who speaks, responds, and analyzes oneself is, in truth, the one that submits, gets embarrassed, becomes vulnerable and inaccurate" (Ferreira, 2019, p. 84).

Following the same line of thought, Sales (2008) understands that discourse analysis in Michel Foucault's (1987) perspective is an archeological investigation, that is, to understand a discourse, one needs to resume the part that does not appear in the object, but was fundamental for its construction.

According to those authors, the philosopher teaches that discourse cannot be analyzed only considering linguistics, but rather as a domination and escape as in a fight. It is during the fight that the discourse defending quality of life appear. The importance of fighting for quality of life might seem obvious, but there is a trend to forget the historical roots and hidden interests in such discourses. According to Rodrigues (1999), since ancient times, Quality of Work Life is a factor of concern that seeks satisfaction and welfare for the workers in the execution of their tasks. The issue here, at this moment, is to know how this discourse was legitimated, that is, how such concern became a demand and was appropriated by the subjects of the discourse we investigate. According to França, Bosquetti and Veloso (2005, p. 2),

[...] determining the origin of the concern with health in the workplace might mean studying the origin of nature transformation by human beings. In other words, from the moment humankind uses tools and creates methods to improve their survival, seeking ways of reducing their effort and minimize suffering, one can say that the concept of health linked to work is embedded in this action.

Despite this natural theoretical assumption, other theories for the origin of this discourse have been created. Among them, the sociotechnical theory appears, whose discourse originated from the predominance of the administrative thought via structuration of work relations within organizations, which coincided also with the workers' collective claims.

Another theory suggests that such discourse emerged as a consequence of the ideal of “total quality in production”, that is, resulting from programs promoted by organizations to improve the quality of their services, thus requiring “individuals who can do, and mainly, want to do more and better, and for this reason they needed to have happy employees” (Fernandes; Gutierrez, 1988, p. 31).

Which seems to be unveiled is that the quality-of-life discourse is legitimated as a function of employers' hegemonic interests, to support the power resulting from the production quality. In other

words, it would not be possible to create a quality-of-life discourse without relating it to labor issues, that is, a discourse about Quality of Work Life (QWL).

Although there is a vast contemporary production on the QWL theme, very little, or almost nothing, has been specifically said about the relational nature of this discourse. It seems that such analysis could be understood as an ungrateful surprise for the capital. However, following the same previous line of reasoning, we might reach understanding from the same genesis, that is, the institutional affirmation, sedimentation and dissemination. Could we then suspect that Education Institutions (EI) are the main propellers of this discourse?

For Demo (2004), the EIs' function involves scientific innovation and intervention in the reality. They are spaces to produce basic, elementary, and higher systematic knowledge. Considering such perspective, Foucault (1987, p. 10) observed that:

[...]is that truth isn't outside power or lacking in power; contrary to a myth whose history and functions would repay further study, truth isn't the reward of free spirits, the child of protracted solitude, nor the privilege of those who have succeeded in liberating themselves).

Thus, it seems possible to understand that those institutions are spaces of discourses produced as higher truths and that their intellectual professors would be the owners of such power, and also of this possibility of freedom.

Also, according to Demo (2004), such institutions, following their own understanding, used cognition to broaden their theories and analytical possibilities, through knowledge obtained from critical activity, aiming at the maintenance of their discourses, their knowledge, and their power, and among them, the discourse for quality of life that targets workers. The discourse intention seems to configure as a disciplinary power mechanism of internalization of values and promotion of habits, behavior, and attitudes that are mainly enjoyed by their promoters, either governments or business groups.

These analyses, following Foucault's reflections, can demonstrate the exercise of power, by listing the best ways of existing. It has been materialized in a disciplinary hegemony, by indicating certain constituents of the individuals' lives in relation to life and work, even before becoming an alleged motivation for the individuals' welfare.

In connection to this relation, for example, Dario (2017), in his dissertation about the quality of life of professors in higher education, pointed out that the organizational culture is a power instrument anchored in a set of social imaginary representations that are built and rebuilt in everyday relationships within the education organization, and which are expressed in terms of values, norms, meanings, and interpretations. A culture that makes the institution a source of identity for its members.

For that researcher, organizations have an ideal, a mission (Dario, 2017). And it is in this way that they are imposed on individuals, giving them the possibility of material, social, and psychological realization. In this perspective, that researcher draws attention to the need for observing human factor in organizations and, by quoting Codo, Sampaio and Hitomi (1993, p. 63), she provokes us to think that que "the individuals' lives cannot be reduced to work but cannot be understood in its absence either. Wherever the causes of mankind's suffering are, they will be in their own lives".

Furthermore, Codo, Sampaio and Hitomi (1993) added that the individuals' experiences in their workplace influence all areas of their lives, their relationships, and mainly their physical and mental health. Therefore, organizations cause direct loss or gain in the individuals' quality of life.

This movement is observed in practice when the approaches to the quality-of-life theme occur in a kind of scientific frenzy, with hundreds of publications and contemporary research. Since there is broad discussion, it has several focuses and investigation instruments. Consequently, the more extensive the digression seems to be, the more distant its systematization is for those observing the phenomenon or studying the theme. This is the task pursued in this book since even if there is no comfortable and consecrated conceptual zone for

this theme, such construct must be permeated with the necessary epistemic depth in an active search for this systematization.

Etymologically, the term quality derives from the Latin *qualis* and means a characteristic way of being that something presents in itself or in relation to something different, it might have positive or negative meanings (Qualidade, 2021). Landeiro *et al.* (2011) observed that the term and concept of quality of life (QoL) originated from the economic growth and development occurred after the World War II. The same authors explained that it started to be used in Brazil from the 1970s onwards, firstly in health services and after 1988, it was consecrated with the enactment of the citizen Federal Constitution (FC) and, consequently, with the creation of the Brazilian Health Unified System (SUS). It initially focused on patients that were assisted by the system.

According to Day and Jankey (1996), approaches used in quality-of-life studies can be classified under four general optics, namely, economic, psychological, biomedical, and holistic. For those authors, the economic approach is based on social indicators and the North Americans were the first users who brought about this focus using it as a political agenda in the 1960s.

Regarding the psychological approach, those authors sought indicators relating individuals' subjective reactions to their experiences. In the biomedical approach, the issue refers to the impact of health conditions on the ability to live fully. As regards holistic approaches, those authors pointed out a perception of the multidimensional character of this construct in which quality of life requires a complex and dynamic analysis, differing from person to person, environment, and the context where it is inserted.

What is proposed here requires a suitable way and a recognized scientific method to analyze reality.

## **1.2 The Dialectical-Historical Materialist Method in QoL analyses**

To observe people's quality of life, one needs to offer the conditions for the interpretation of such reality based on certain perspective

or methodology. As previously mentioned, to produce knowledge, the scholar's first choice regards a method to discuss the theme. It is highly relevant in society that the readers notice it broadly.

Such method must be presented in perspective regarding the logical consequences that will allow a better understanding of the reality, which is seen in the world. Therefore, this book proposes a dialogue with the theme supported by the Dialectical Historical Materialism Method (DHM) and then introduces other routes.

Resuming the core issue proposed in this book, it seems relevant to emphasize this movement as an attempt to synthesize something rather complex as the dialectical historical method and thus demonstrate its application.

Certainly, this shortcut would not be enough for a formal specialized academic introduction of philosophy, sociology, or political economy, nor would it be enough in a deeper and virtuous debate of specialized ideas since it is a method used to think about social phenomena throughout history. Therefore, we propose the thesis that Quality of Life is a social phenomenon that must, as we understand, be studied using DHM.

DHM is a world conception developed by the German thinkers Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in the 19th Century (boucher, 2015). It operates with economic interest notions of a dominant class, who owns the production means and wealth, and produces distortions of the reality, determining false appearances, thus creating some alienation in the antagonistic class, who sells their workforce. The latter, in turn, is seen as an exploited class, who at different historical moments serves the market purposes of the former to the detriment of their own interests.

It is, therefore, a philosophy that thinks of the subjects and their relationships as a function of their materiality, their real existence, and their misfortune. However, in this work, it will be treated from a simplified perspective, in a propositional way in relation to the subject and the objects of the phenomenon investigated. Donizeti (2016) explained the humanist position of the renowned philosopher Jean Paul Sartre regarding these contents. According

to him, Sartre stated that DHM is an unbeatable philosophy and so is its method. The brief consideration applied in this work is a humble attempt to explain the use of such method by means of a basic understanding of its perspective. We expect this will shed some light on our choice of method. According to the thoughts put forward by the historian and economy professor João Antônio de Paula (1992, p. 20): “While the capitalist reality exists in its forms and consequences, Marxism will remain the most important analytical instrument of intervention”. From this perspective, we might understand that wherever capitalist relations permeate society under a state ruler, social phenomena such as quality of life can be analyzed and understood in a methodic agreement with the dialectical historical materialism.

Materialism enunciating Marx’s analysis method is an indication to look into reality, which we aim to investigate, and which demands previous ideation or a previous thought about such reality. In this conception, social beings exist, they are made of flesh and bones, they need to live in the world before anything else, they depend on the materiality of all things and must seek it anyway, they need to either produce it or acquire it. In the materialistic view, this process will always occur by means of human action, that is, human work.

For this reason, human beings are seen as depending on nature and wishing to master it to fulfill their demands. And in this movement to transform matter, the explanation of social phenomena resides, this results in an analysis method, a way of understanding real-world dynamics, by interpreting relations and interactions built up by and between human beings, which have made life possible in its social aspect.

According to this materialistic view, analyzing the world is the same as understanding it in relation to an economic base, an economic determinism which is always in a central position. This context provides all the other perspectives, structures, thoughts and analyses, which are built up as the main function of the production modes and the different ways of appropriation.

Considering that, materialism or the economic criterion ends up dividing individuals into antagonist classes, namely, those who own the production means and those who depend on their workforce to survive. Such conditions preset the individuals' reasons to exist and their social perspectives. Different forms of ownership and social existence conditions are the foundation of a superstructure of impressions, illusions, ways of thinking and particular philosophical conceptions. One class creates and consolidates them on corresponding material conditions and social relationships. "The single individual, who derives them through tradition and upbringing, may imagine that they form the real motives and the starting point of his activity" (Marx, 1852, p. 139).

Marx (1852) defended that this rivalry between antagonists, this fight for perspectives in a fight between social classes, this movement of attack and defense of interests throughout time shaped the humankind historical moments. Therefore, human beings would be moved by the social position in each historical period.

History, in turn, would be a succession of portraits of epochs about "how men and women organized work, produced and distributed products. How they appropriate nature" (Paula, 1992, p. 28). A movement that sometimes advances, other times goes back due to such tensions and drawbacks produced by one class over their rival. In such conception, the social being is historical, and humankind went through a path that resembles a spiral, moving forwards and backwards according to the moment when property and mastering of nature were determined as objects of supremacy or domination.

In the Marxist view, several historical movements were configured by this material base, in the dynamics of how economic production modes operate at each time and on which political thoughts and legal proposals were built. According to Marx "it is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness" (Marx, 2008b, p. 29).

According to the developments of each time, this consciousness suffers changes following the economic parameters experienced. The

history of societies would be determined by its economic base. For this reason, each historical moment is presented according to the production modes and class struggles of that time. This historicity is supported by the analysis of social phenomena employing the historical materialism method. Human beings are protagonists and transformers of history (Alves, 2010).

We also think it is necessary to address, even if briefly, dialectics by Marx and Engels. This proposal is a technique, a method of analysis of phenomena seeking to capture its contradictions and antagonisms that determined realities perceived rather than thoughts, abstractions or an absolute world of ideas.

Concrete reality necessarily results from this struggle, this conflict between determinants that are continuously rival in a continuous movement which unfolds History.

Some positions prevail at times, while opposition sometimes stands out, reality changes, advancing or going backwards according to one or another point of view. Therefore, reason occurs via denial of reality and becomes the affirmation of another reality which, in turn, also becomes contradictory. It is in permanent dialogue and continuous indetermination. If reality is moving, the dialectic method must accompany it so that its accuracy is not lost, as warned by its creator.

Taking these considerations about the dialectic method, we can see that in the analysis of social phenomena, such as the quality-of-life study, we cannot ignore the details of each element, or each subject comprised in it. In addition, we must find the most intimate connections between them. Only then, after this empirical or broad dive, verifying the continuous tension between them, can one go back to the construction of a concrete and universal reality.

After analyzing its authors' discourse, our understanding is that the method is polyphasic.

The first judgment is that of individuality; the isolated fact that friction produces heat is registered. The second judgment is that of particularity: a special form of motion, mechanical motion, exhibits the property, under special

conditions (through friction), of passing into another special form of motion, viz., heat. The third judgment is that of universality: any form of motion proves able and compelled to undergo transformation into any other form of motion (Engels, 1883, p. 663).

According to Lukács (2003) and his thorough study of the Marxist theory, the first phase would be the analysis of the immediate expression of phenomena, their singularity, their immediatism, a chaotic concrete or one of ordinary perceptions, superficial senses and apparent reality. The second phase would reveal the complexity and internal relationships, the laws ruling it, the intrinsic particularities of the social phenomenon, a deep dive in abstractions that conceptually define the phenomenon. The third phase would be the return to its total concreteness, in which the phenomenon starts to be understood and explained, after having been seen and thought over, in the universally accepted sense. Marx (2008b) ensured that human knowledge must follow two opposed paths: one starting from the immediate, apparently singular reality up to the highest abstractions and then returning with the concrete, thought reality, which starts to be understood in a more accurate way.

Santos *et al.* (2018) stated that dialectical-historical materialism is the necessary input to explain social phenomena that imply human relations through their production and consumption means, the existing contradictions and movements of these relationships. It can be used when thinking about the vulnerability of subjects in classes, more clearly, it can be the view used to unveil the increase in and maintenance of capital accumulation to the detriment of the human labor exploitation expressed by its consequences.

Therefore, the search for the best truth would occur by means of revealing the appearance of phenomena in the world, thus exposing intentions that motivate them with a view that uncovers the initial alienation. Such investigation process would occur by means of mediations, using more general conceptual categories that might be pointed out due to their connections and their contradictions with the totality of the phenomenon studied.

Therefore, Quality of Life is seen as a phenomenon of diverse realities loaded with assumed subjectivities, and it is possible to think about analyzing it based on a multidimensional prism or grouping due to the distinguishable realities, which bear similar characteristics. DHM is the method that allows the emergence of relations from the totality under study with greater chance of identification with the concrete reality.

However, DHM presupposes tension. What does it mean to think the opposite of Quality of Life (QoL) for an individual? If we think that QoL is a phenomenon with many facets, but one that can be studied by the domains previously proposed, we can think of an element that might oppose each dimension suggested. This will be deepened in the second chapter of this book, but, for instance, what would be the antagonist of physical Quality of Life? Likewise, we can apply such understanding to the psychological QoL domain. Is a mental illness necessarily an antagonist to the mental Quality of Life? And considering that, does it apply to speaking of environmental illness as an antagonist to the Quality of Work Life (QWL) construct? According to the fundamental ideas presented by Marx and Engels, the economic view must be always in a central position to understand social phenomena in their historical contexts and the phenomenon of the individuals' Quality of Life might be comprised in it. Thus, we understand that it is possible to verify that the human Quality of Life results from the participant existence of a hegemonic movement that determines it in its entirety. This book presents this possibility, thus proposing a dialogue between the DHM classical categories with those theorized for the human Quality of Life.



## CHAPTER II

### **Quality of Life (QoL), health, and getting ill**

At the first moment, when brainstorming, a confusion between the representation of quality of life and that of the individuals' health is quite common. Such belief falls apart when considering the dialogue between the literature sources.

Tani (2002) teaches us that good quality of life implies having physical and mental health, but not only. Likewise, it is not enough to have the basic needs that guarantee survival such as food, drinks, clothes and housing included in that set. There is the need, which goes beyond the factors mentioned above, for harmony in social relationships, permanent education, and a good relationship with the environment, having free time for leisure and opportunities to enjoy cultural events.

Initially, we observe several dimensions regarding quality of life, but this mapping as a sum of factors is not enough either because there is the individuals' subjectivity issue, therefore, other focuses and concepts are added. The authors Gill and Feinstein (1994) explain that quality of life is perceived in relation to the individuals' personal life general aspects such as self-esteem, for example. For this reason, the initial perception is that the term quality of life might entail a lot, but at the same time, cannot limit its entirety yet.

Heading towards this conceptual clarification (unification and universalization), the World Health Organization Quality of Life (WHOQOL), a discussion group focusing on this theme, conceptualizes the QoL construct as the "individuals' perception of their position in life, in the context of the culture and value system where they live and in relation to their objectives, expectations, standards and concerns" (WHOQOL, 1994, p. 3).

This concept was consolidated by public health measuring strategies due to the need for a new paradigm to combat illnesses that affected individuals all over the world. As a result of this consolidation, an understanding that quality of life goes far beyond the mere issue of physical and mental welfare occurred since it affects other aspects or dimensions of human life, including spirituality.

For the WHO (1998), the more the interest in the measurement of health indicators grew, the more traditional mortality and morbidity rates became insufficient, and, consequently, the need for providing human comfort and welfare was noticed, and the need for understanding the motivations of the human daily activities was established. Another requirement resided in the fact that functionality measures were not enough to measure human beings' complete fulfillment. Therefore, the mechanistic model based on the concept of health as the absence of illness was exhausted. The need for a distinct and broader understanding of the meanings of a harmonic or motivated human life was evidenced, pointing to issues that go beyond those inherent in the body and mind and that appear in issues external to them.

For this reason, the health care area started to consider the measurement of such issues by means of a reference that was called Quality of Life. In this perspective, with a better understanding of the health construct, the WHO (1998) redefined it as the "state of full biological, psychic, and social welfare". For that organization, understanding the health construct depended on the understanding of the welfare concept, which, in turn, was linked to the perception of quality of life. However, due to the absence of a universal concept, they created the WHOQOL (1993) to pursue this target.

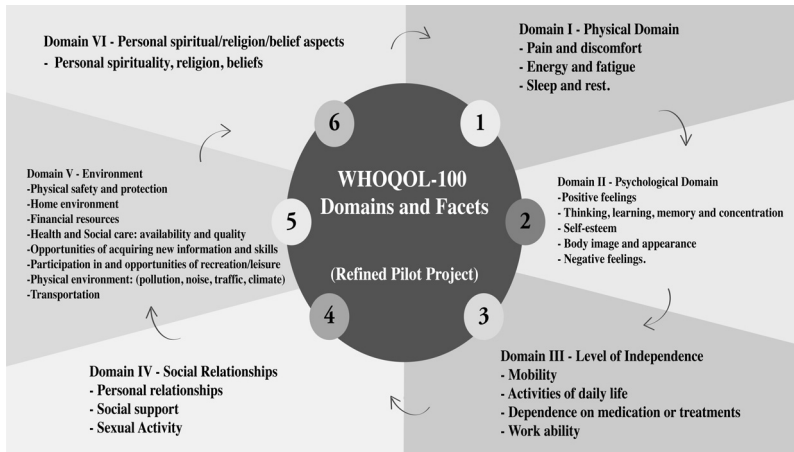
The challenge of broadening a complex and systematized view of the individuals' perception of quality of life came before the clarification of these concepts. Following this line, the WHO believed that human welfare measurement and promotion require analytical accuracy.

Apart from physical and psychological health, the level of independence, the social relationships and the personal beliefs, the

individuals' broad interactions with their environments are also determining elements. In addition to being multidimensional, the concept of quality of life is inserted in a perspective of the individuals' subjectivity, which is also multicultural. However, this is not a reason to give up its systematization in a commonly and universally accepted term. Conversely, the search for clarification of this theme has been growing.

At that point, WHOQOL (1994) grouped aspects related to the individual's perception of their quality of life with similar characteristics, reaching the understanding of the human life dimensions, and segmenting them into similar fractions, thus identifying the different domains. Furthermore, they sought a way to reach intercultural validity, so that it could be captured, tested, and universally accepted. The WHO method was developed for the validation of instruments theorized by the idea of domains, human fields of existence or pleasurable fulfilment, as well as subjection to suffering, whose result is given by the individual measurement, as in a score, of the individual's quality of life. The construction of those domains and their aspects occurred by means of a consensus among health scientists from different cultures, individuals from the general population considered "healthy" and individuals who contacted health services to treat some illness (WHOQOL, 1994). The pilot project proposed six domains, namely, physical, psychological, level of independence, social relationships, environmental relationships, and beliefs. After analyzing the content of the participants' answers, semantic equivalence, and use of visual scaling methodologies, a group of experts from WHOQOL (1994) managed to reduce the issues and refine them into facets of each domain, as shown below (Figure 1).

**Figure 1** – WHOQOL-100 domains and facets



Source: adapted from WHOQOL (1994).

Even with the definition of domains and facets to measure individuals' quality of life and facing the need to systematize and use more practical measurement instruments, which demand shorter input time, and keeping interest in the cooperation and at the same time satisfactory psychometric features, the World Health Organization Quality of Life group developed a shorter instrument, o WHOQOL-bref (2020). In the development of the work, a panel of experts established conceptual representations of each domain, where all facets originated and, therefore, items in the environment domain were replaced for being too correlated with those in the psychological domain, for example. Other items were also substituted in the same way and a confirming factorial analysis was carried out for that solution, thus reducing the QoL approach to four domains only, namely, physical, psychological, social relations, and environment. A score on those domains would provide enough data to measure human quality of life.

Although this conceptual line was more disseminated, due to its association with the development of such a broad and converging

instrument, we could not ignore the existence of other proposals for quality-of-life analyses.

Considering the analysis based on the dialectical movement, those proposals would be other critical and antagonistic starting points, that is, other theoretical focuses appeared, exactly as announced by the method we proposed for the quality-of-life analysis using DHM.

For those authors divergent of the WHO proposal, the viability of uniting the diverse life dimensions is not evident in the concept proposed by that organization. For them, such concept addresses health by fragmenting it as the sum of parts rather than a complex unit, which is influenced and modified by several factors.

Regarding that previous understanding, the construct used by them, in the complexity that involves the theme, is lifestyle. It would be part of the whole, influencing and being influenced by the whole through positive or negative behavior that would contribute to order or disorder, a type of link integrating the individuals' quality of life.

Nahas (2017, p. 13), a renowned Brazilian author who discussed the theme, adopted this holistic view of quality of life as “a wellbeing perception resulting from a set of individual and socio-environmental parameters, either modifiable or not, which characterize the individuals' life conditions”. For him, lifestyle might lead most people to a positive health, with longevity, or the opposite, thus generating quality of life and motivation loss.

Also, according to Nahas (2017), who authored the “wellbeing Pentateuch”, there is solid evidence that the individuals' lifestyle is a determining factor for most people of whether they will be ill or healthy in the medium and long term. He proposed five determining factors, namely, nutrition, physical activity, stress, social relationships, and preventive behavior.

When reflecting upon such behavior, lifestyle becomes a broad concept depending on the conditions and opportunities people experience. Therefore, it is possible to understand the critique that in the complex, the analysis should not start from the parts

since they cannot be understood in isolation for having their own inherent complexities.

Therefore, following Nahas's (2017) thoughts, understanding the quality-of-life fragmentation into domains is not enough since "lifestyle" would be the determining element intertwined and inseparable. For this reason, we will bring it back elsewhere in the book. What matters in this topic is the demonstration of the conceptual dispute.

According to Priess (2010), individuals seem to be more concerned with their economic-professional, technical and cultural development than with their wellbeing, leisure and other factors related to quality of life. And this reality might be reproducible. What would be the prevalent answer if we asked students and workers about their greatest achievement in life? What if we asked about the greatest happiness factor in their lives? In our thesis, the answer would be completely different. What might be the reason for such difference?

Thus, another form of quality-of-life analysis could be the individual's perception of personal satisfaction as a measure of their wellbeing. For Renwick and brown (1996), feeling a high level of subjective wellbeing would mean to reach the so-called "happiness". Therefore, those authors understand that a happy person shows high subjective wellbeing and is "satisfied" with their life, living it in a positive way. Conversely, a person with low subjective wellbeing would be unsatisfied with life and experience negative emotions such as anxiety and/or depression. They are unhappy with their lives and might get ill as a result.

In such spiral movement of debate of ideas and defense of positions, buss (2000) also explained that for him, quality of life is the product of a broad spectrum of factors related to individuals' "life conditions" and exemplifies with a suitable standard of nutrition, housing, work conditions, with the presence of education opportunities throughout life and a social support network. That author emphasizes the importance of a responsible lifestyle and a suitable spectrum of proper health care.

This concept is more linked to the collective of individuals and the environment, comprising physical, social, economic and cultural environments in a broad sense. According to it, QoL would result from public policies and favorable conditions to the empowerment of individuals and communities. The use of the Human Development Index (HDI) as a reference to approach quality of life in certain populations is not unusual. This is one way of observing life conditions and indirectly the degree of success of policies aimed at the promotion of a healthy life. This perspective also dialogues with the DHM since the materiality becomes more evident as a determining factor of QoL.

Going further, there is another theory that understands the individuals' Quality of Life (QoL) phenomenon through their relationship with their Work (Quality of Life at the Workplace – QWL). In this perspective, Loscocco and Roschelle (1991) were pioneers in the treatment of this issue with a more specific look and defending that quality of life should be analyzed as the result of the composition of realities that cannot be separated. Thus, they suggest more materially dimensioned categories for the phenomenon and highlight the Quality of Work Life (QWL) construct as central.

This issue will be approached in more detail in this work not intentionally, but rather as a result of the movement guided by the method. For this reason, it will be further discussed in another chapter.

Therefore, seeking the reference that could help us understand reality in the same movement of the dialectical-historical materialism, we searched the intrinsic and extrinsic tensions that can define human illnesses based on the ideas of this book.

The capitalistic mode of production (essentially the production of surplus-value, the absorption of surplus-labour), produces thus, with the extension of the working-day, not only the deterioration of human labour-power by robbing it of its normal, moral and physical, conditions of development and function. It produces also the premature exhaustion and death of this labour-power itself. [73]

It extends the labourer's time of production during a given period by shortening his actual life-time. (Marx, 2008a, p. 307).

Now our focus is on the human being's illnesses, which are always associated with work-related phenomena regarding their quality of life. In general, understanding getting ill as losing one's health would be the common-sense perception, which is a superficial, natural and only initial step of the interpretation movement. Likewise, one can prematurely understand human illnesses at the level of the physical-mental domain of the quality of life. So, what would be a precise definition of being healthy or being ill? What do they mean in a society ruled by the capitalist system?

Resuming the WHO concept (1948) that understands that "health is the most complete state of physical, mental, and social welfare", we realize the broadness and depth of what it could merely or chaotically seem before diving in the conceptual abstractions and thinking. When looking closely at it, the health concept built by WHO regards the individuals' social context, and according to Marx, this is a category that depends on the individuals' socio-economic class. This position is, therefore, within a time and place context, depending on individual values, scientific, religious, and philosophical conceptions. More than that, it depends on one's understanding of what welfare means. Jesus (2006, p. 129) discussed the theories of wellbeing and considering the theoretical and practical evolution assumed by that construct or category and defined it as "the result of the individuals' general positive orientation towards life occurrences", which is somehow the individuals' degree of satisfaction in their multiple life dimensions.

The WHO health concept, dating back to 1948, was created to reduce the dispute of superficiality opposed to historical construction. At that time, the health concept "[...], that is, the ascension of socialism. Health should express the right to a complete life, without deprivation" (Scliar, 2007, p. 37). Under this perspective we might understand that being healthy is something unattainable when we realize that this concept gains political

aspects which present difficult technical and intervening control, by personal and social value judgements inherent in it.

The economic structures' reaction in the technical environment once more intended to limit health in the objective issue according to that author by resuming the health concept linked to physical and mental functions only and thus agreeing with Boorse (1977, p. 37), who first defended that "health is the absence of illness".

We can see that both context and time tensions occur in relation to the health category and, therefore, the conceptual category of illness. What the WHO proposes is the possibility of going towards continuous improvement preventing more and more individuals' illnesses.

There is no reference to welfare related to absence of suffering, absence of stress or a synonym for quality of life. There is a wide variety of pleasures (positive emotions) in the different sectors of life such as, for example, at work. Considering this conceptual basis, conventional work, when carried out in precarious conditions, could always be seen as a potential factor favoring the appearance of illnesses. Trying to separate the WHO concept of health is a continuous reaction by the economic structure in the social field, where materialism is strongly noticed.

It seems relevant to highlight that even through this type of conceptual domination, capital tries to limit the state role in social promotion as a source of public health. In such perspective, Harvey (2008) points out that the role of the capitalist, neoliberal state is to guarantee, at any costs, the market functioning and this price is always paid by the working class. The flexibilization of their work conditions, their collective achievements, and labor rights are promoted either by means of the managerialism of education institutions or lack of protection and regulation or instability of the employment relationships.

Antunes and Praun (2015, p. 424) point out that precariousness and flexibilization are the causes of workers' illnesses. According to those authors, flexibilization "[...] synthesizes what part of the sociology authors have defined since the 1980s, as

*work precariousness*". When understood as a contradictory process such precariousness provokes workers' resistance and as a trend, it appears as a continuous process, whose imposition mechanisms are intertwined with permanent needs for capital appreciation, the system self-replication and reiterated inventiveness.

In this sense, precariousness is, on the one hand, a phenomenon intrinsic to sociability built under the capital rule; on the other hand, it is a particular form taken by the work exploitation process under capitalism in its structural crisis phase. It might then be more or less intense since it is not a static form. In times of crisis – especially when it has a clearly structural nature – its intensification is observed. What we can see these days is a trend to the *work structural precariousness at a global level*, in which the immigrant work is its most visible and brutal expression (Antunes; Praun, 2015, p. 413, emphasis by the author, our translation).

Taking that into consideration, there are no limits for precariousness, only different manifestations with higher or lower intensity. Those authors also explain other issues subjacent to the increase in the number of psychic illnesses observed in the working class in the contemporary capitalist system. Those include broken solidarity bonds, individualization, and loneliness in the workplace; target management; outsourcing; disregard of accidents and death in the workplace. We believe that when treating individuals' causes of illnesses, we must associate them with those individuals' quality of life. This is the scope of the social field in relation to objects and phenomena in the biological and psychic fields.

Regarding the facts exposed, this understanding must consider such path. It might be difficult for pragmatics defenders and technicians in the area to understand that it is not possible to create a therapeutic public policy without social criteria or without social value judgements. But the capitalist system dedicates itself to emptying such understanding. According to it, conventional

work must appear always pleasant, while human illnesses are only personal fate.

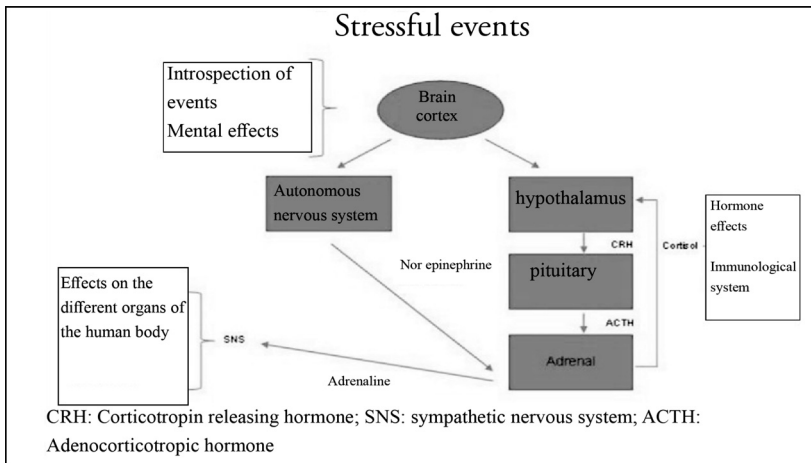
Therefore, what seems to become evident is the exposure to varied levels of suffering, that is, a deleterious level of stress caused by work. Such exposure might lead individuals to get physically and emotionally ill due to a lack of harmony (homeostasis) experienced by those organisms.

This is explained in the work on stress by the renowned medical doctor Hans Selye (1936). He demonstrated, through evidence, that certain levels of stress result in biochemical chain reactions that promote a condition of physiological loss of control in the human body. Selye's studies contributed to the identification of the cause of stress-related illnesses due to intense or chronic suffering.

Since stress can lead to illnesses, we infer that stress stimuli reach the brain (Figure 1) determining mental conditions and influencing autonomic circuits that might lead to hormonal and immunological malfunction and affect the performance of several organs in the human body.

Chronic stress situations are almost always associated with clinical and degenerative conditions such as increased insulin resistance, atherosclerosis, arterial hypertension, obesity, osteoporosis, immunological alterations, and psychiatric disorders (Borges Neto, 2011; Mattos, 2011).

**Figure 1** – Scheme of the stress response physiopathological activation



Source: Adapted from Sardá Júnior, Legal and Jablonski Júnior (2004).

According to Sardá Júnior, Legal and Jablonski Júnior (2004), the Autonomous Nervous System (SNA) produces symptoms and signs of malfunction, that is, the unconscious part of the individuals' physiological system. This is the mechanism through which suffering can materialize via stressful events, which might lead to getting ill. This provides a theoretical model in which getting ill is directly related to overload, excess stress and loss of Quality of Work Life (QWL).

In this epistemological movement, we find support to the Marxist method explanation of social phenomena, including human illnesses. Work exploitation is a determining factor in the production system which increases the demands for engagement and overcoming adversities, the so-called resilience, and at the same time exposes individuals to overload, suffering, stress and illnesses. For this reason, we can understand the current historical component of getting ill.

This process of getting ill results from the production mode of each analysis time. If the abstraction points to the validity of the

DHM, it is because there is materiality, historicity, and struggle when we reflect upon human illnesses related to their work. Naturally, when adopting this understanding, we challenge the fact that subjectivity or self-perception in the context of systematization of the quality-of-life theme results from the unconscious or superficial internalization of real experiences of this tension between work and the satisfaction with the reward achieved.

## **2.1 Health factors and indicators for QoL**

As discussed in this work, quality of life is a self-perception resulting from individuals' physical, mental and social wellbeing mediated by their struggle within the productive demand of the (capitalist) state.

Regarding its relationship with the health dimension, quality of life might be influenced by several well-known factors and related in their causality, which impact the projection of morbidity and mortality indicators of a population. These factors influence individuals' level of satisfaction in their lives, and it is certain that their degree of impact can also vary depending on the individuals' age, health background and objectives.

All facts are relevant and are part of the phenomenon intrinsic relations. The conceptual difference between factor and indicator is that a factor is a variable that influences a result, while an indicator is a measure that represents the result of a process or phenomenon. In other words, a factor is a cause, while an indicator is an effect.

An example to illustrate that is the Human Development Index (HDI), which is an indicator comprising three factors: health, education and income. HDI is considered a measure of human development in a country and the dimensions that compose it are the factors that influence it.

In thesis, the identification of factors and the verification of indicators define targets and guide faster and more efficient interventions to reach different objectives. Statistical analyses are an important instrument to better develop personal and social strategies since they allow monitoring and evolution of processes in the light

of an objective view, even if there are other issues to be addressed regarding subjectivities. Increasing consensus about choices, revealing and raising awareness of the actors involved in specific processes and including them in the social public policies is not an easy task. This is one of the main tasks of the human evolution construction called science. Therefore, let's take a look at the most studied factors and indicators of personal and collective Quality of Life.

### 2.1.1 The cardiovascular factor

The cardiovascular factor is essential for quality of life since the circulatory or cardiovascular system supplies oxygen and nutrients to all body cells. When faulty, it might result in disabling symptoms even in very common situations in everyday life. In addition, it has been the factor most often associated with mortality all over the world.

For this reason, the management of the cardiovascular risk factor is highly relevant. However, it is also complex because it includes control of blood pressure, cardiac frequency, dyslipidemia (cholesterol and triglycerides rates) and glycemia. It is also associated with other factors that will be addressed below such as alcohol consumption and smoking habits, family background (genetics), sedentarism, comorbidities and obesity (metabolic syndrome), stress and anxiety, drug therapies, etc. are all risk factors for cardiovascular diseases.

Not only does understanding and seeking cardiovascular health prolong individuals' lives but also improves their quality of life for allowing full enjoyment of social activities. Massaroli *et al.* (2021) carried out a systematic review of articles to related risks indicators of cardiovascular diseases focusing on quality of life and disease prevention. They verified that the most relevant cardiovascular risk indicators were gender, age, BMI, abdominal circumference, body fat percentage, and triglycerides. According to those authors, the prevalence of cardiovascular diseases such as arterial hypertension increased with age and body mass, and their results pointed out that sedentarism also led to blood pressure changes.

Another relevant finding is that cardiovascular diseases show higher prevalence in the population with lower socioeconomic level who live in the periphery of large cities. Those individuals experience low access to essential services such as health, education, and basic sanitation, which affect negatively their health conditions (Lunkes *et al.*, 2018) and, consequently, their quality of life. Thus, there is no doubt that the protector effect against cardiovascular diseases depends on a set of actions and resources, which is reached when conducted by health promotion different areas, each one working according to their competence (Barel *et al.*, 2010).

### 2.1.2 Physical activity level

In all phases of life, from childhood to older age, doing physical exercises is fundamental and a determining health factor. Thus, it is an essential pillar of quality of life. Regular physical activity increases wellbeing, improves body functions and memory quality, helps weight control and balance of the blood flow fat rates, control of blood hypertension, and reduces the risk of degenerative chronic illnesses. It improves the individuals' skills and physical fitness.

In addition to physical benefits, mainly due to the improvement of cardiovascular health due to the weight control and musculoskeletal strengthening, physical activities also have positive psychological effects. It releases endorphins, which are neurotransmitters related to the feeling of wellbeing, self-esteem, and stress relief (Rebar *et al.*, 2015).

The practice of social physical activities, such as team sports, might improve individuals' social skills and provide them with a better sense of community. On the other hand, lack of physical activity is related to lower quality of life, mainly regarding mental health (Reiner *et al.*, 2013).

Oliveira *et al.* (2015) evaluated risk factors for cardiovascular diseases in taxi drivers. They evidenced that these two factors might influence QoL, such finding was justified by the sedentary lifestyle of that study population. Del Duca *et al.* (2009) observed, in the gross analysis of their study on physical activity and economic

conditions, a direct association between workplace, home and commuting with the individuals' economic level. They reported an inverse association between physical inactivity and economic level, which guides us back to the social thesis that appears explicitly and implicitly in this work.

Therefore, in this topic, we emphasize that doing physical exercises regularly aiming at wellbeing, stress and anxiety control is an indicator of good health and quality of life since it prevents several diseases.

### 2.1.3 Eating habits

Eating habits play a critical role in quality of life since they impact profoundly our physical health, mental wellbeing, and general vitality. It is widely known that diets rich in processed food, with artificial additives, conservatives, added sugar and high sodium content have harmful effects on individuals' health.

Furthermore, diets that are rich in saturated fats, mainly found in fried food, fat meat, and full fat dairy products might contribute to high cholesterol levels, formation of arterial plates, and increased risk of metabolic, hormonal and cardiovascular diseases. Such unhealthy eating habits have been constantly associated with higher risk of developing a wide spectrum of chronic physical diseases. Furthermore, these unhealthy eating habits might also manifest as humor disorders, irritability, and fatigue (Pistollato *et al.*, 2018). Consuming highly processed and sugary food might lead to fast peaks and drops in sugar levels in the blood, thus causing humor oscillations and lethargy sensation.

Concerning this theme, research has indicated a significant association between bad eating habits and higher risk of mental health disorders such as depression and anxiety. On the other hand, adopting a diet that prioritizes whole, minimally processed foods offers an array of benefits to both physical and mental wellbeing (Parletta; Milte; Meyer, 2017).

Including an abundance of fruit, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins and healthy fats was associated to reduced inflammation,

improved digestion and immunological function, and ideal weight control. In addition, a diet full of nutrients, rich in antioxidants, vitamins, and minerals might support individuals' cognitive function, improve their humor and protect them against the effects of age on their brain health.

Incentivizing people to make better informed decisions regarding the food they consume and offer resources supporting meal plans, cooking techniques, and raising awareness about the importance of balanced nutrition might contribute significantly to positive changes in individuals' lifestyles. By prioritizing whole food and avoiding or reducing the intake of processed and sugary items, individuals might take significant steps towards optimizing their lives, general wellbeing, and therefore, their quality of life.

The impact of eating habits on quality of life must not be underestimated. However, what can we say when the country shows a huge social inequality, in which the poverty of many leads them to experience food insecurity? How can we discuss quality and selection of food when the citizens' economic power is insufficient? This might be the moment when classrooms, mainly those of organic sciences, are involved in the debate about public policies towards food security, field education, land reform, family farming, and cooperativism.

#### 2.1.4 The sleep habit factor

Sleep quality has been more and more recognized as a crucial aspect of the individuals' wellbeing and quality of life. Sleep deprivation has been associated with a series of health problems such as hypertension, obesity, diabetes, depression, and anxiety (Walker, 2017). Furthermore, it has a significant impact on memory, learning, and the cognitive function (Mednick *et al.*, 2008). Investing the promotion of good sleep habits is fundamental to improve quality of life.

Therefore, sleep importance in the performance of individuals' tasks has been widely studied, and research has suggested that good sleep hygiene is essential to keep it. Sleep hygiene refers to

a series of behaviors and practices that aim at promoting healthy and restoring sleep.

Some of those habits include setting a regular routine of times to sleep and wake up, creating a favorable environment to sleep (such as a dark, silent, and comfortable room), avoiding the consumption of stimulants such as caffeine and nicotine before sleeping, as well as doing relaxing activities before going to bed.

There are other factors that might influence sleep quality. One of these factors is the amount of light exposure produced by electronic devices such as computers, cell phones, and tablets, which might harm sleep quality. However, individuals' sleep quality might also be affected by medical conditions such as sleep apnea, restless legs syndrome, and sleep disorders related to work, for example, shift work.

To summarize, guaranteeing good sleep quality is essential for an ideal quality of life, and incentivizing it is a great challenge currently for educators and health professionals. Such context is emphasized when considering individuals in low social conditions such as overcrowded prisons in Brazil, for instance.

#### 2.1.5 The alcohol, tobacco, and psychoactive drug consumption factor

Excessive intake of alcohol, smoking habits and the use of illegal drugs have deep adverse effects on health and quality of life. Excess alcohol increases the risk of hepatic and cardiovascular diseases as well as cancer and can lead to mental disorders such as depression and anxiety (Rehm *et al.*, 2017).

Smoking habits might cause lung cancer and respiratory diseases. They are also linked to higher risk of mental diseases, while the use of illegal drugs might lead to chemical dependence, mental health and social disorders, thus affecting deeply quality of life (Degenhardt *et al.*, 2013). Therefore, prevention and treatment of these harmful behaviors are vital to improve individuals' quality of life.

According to Martins and Zeitoune (2007), these habits present multidimensional causes and only associating them with the mere relation between an individual and a substance is not enough. For those authors, it is necessary to consider the interaction they have within certain context, values, beliefs and their social, economic, and political relations, mainly including the individuals' work.

#### 2.1.6 The stress level factor

Stress is a relevant and central factor when considering quality of life, it affects not only the physical wellbeing of individuals, but also their mental condition. When chronic and not properly managed, it might harm relationships, work, and satisfaction with life. It is associated with higher probability of developing cardiovascular disease, depression, anxiety and gastrointestinal problems (Cohen; Deverts; Miller, 2016).

Concerning the work context, for instance, high stress levels not only hamper the individuals' performance, but can also affect their interpersonal relationships, sleep quality, and the ability to enjoy life outside the work environment. As previously seen, the cumulative impact of stress might lead to countless physiological alterations, including the immunological system, thus increasing vulnerability to diseases and reduced recovery capacity.

To improve quality of life and reduce the negative effects of stress, the adoption of life-changing strategies is essential. These might include determining some limits to work and prioritizing self-care. In addition, seeking social and professional support whenever needed are important measures to manage stress efficiently and protect quality of life.

For recognizing the relationship between stress and quality of life, Malagris (2000) suggests that individuals must restructure the stressors that cannot be eliminated and eliminate those that can be eliminated. Regarding that author's advice, the authors of this work criticize such posture. In this thesis, "impossible" is the meaning given to an extension of production which leads

to wearing and failure, in a reactive determinant, structured on resilience, which hides the necessary limit before the delayed outcome for the worker. The organic paths of such outcome have been previously illustrated.

### 2.1.7 Body Mass Index (BMI)

The widely used Body Mass Index (BMI) is currently an important index-factor for quality of life. Obesity, measured by a high BMI is associated with a variety of health problems, including cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, cancer and liver diseases (Apovian, 2016). In addition, excess weight might lead to hormonal malfunction and chronic inflammation, which have a negative effect on QoL (Luppino *et al.*, 2010).

Tozetto *et al.* (2021) verified in their study the waist/height ratio (BMI) confirmation as a relevant anthropometric indicator correlated and associated with the physical component in obese adults. Therefore, promoting a healthy BMI is important in an ideal context.

However, it is worth noting that proper BMI does not necessarily mean a healthy body, a healthy being and/or one with quality of life. Having quality of life related to BMI goes beyond a pre-defined and categorized number. It does not relate weight with the individuals' nutritional index, thus compromising an isolated evaluation based on a number only.

This factor is also related to emotional aspects since it might be linked to the individuals' self-image and self-esteem. Several self-image disorders are verified in the contemporary world, mainly in young individuals who seek perfect bodies advertised by the media, which hampers their mental health and quality of life.

### 2.1.8 Health indicators

Health indicators play a crucial role in the assessment of quality of life in a population. They provide invaluable information about the health conditions and wellbeing of a community and are used to monitor and improve the individuals' life conditions. Some of the main health indicators closely linked to quality of life are listed below:

**1 - Life expectancy:** the mean life expectancy of a population is a key indicator of quality of life. The higher the life expectancy in general is, the better the quality of life is.

**2 - Child mortality:** child mortality rate is the number of infants dying before reaching one year of life per thousand births. A low rate indicates good health conditions and medical assistance for the mothers and newborns.

**3 - Maternal mortality rate:** this rate refers to the number of women's death related to pregnancy, delivery or post-partum complications per 100,000 live births. This is a critical indicator of the quality of the mothers' health system.

**4 - Vaccination rate:** the vaccination rate is a relevant indicator of public health and disease prevention. High vaccination rates protect people against infectious diseases.

**5 - Basic sanitation rate:** the availability of clean drinkable water and proper sanitation has a direct impact on health and quality of life. Lack of these services might lead to waterborne diseases and health problems

**6 - Disease prevalence rates:** the incidence of diseases might affect significantly quality of life. Such conditions might be prevented or managed with proper care.

Summing up, health indicators are parameters measured and used to assess the health conditions in a population and, therefore, their quality of life. Improving these indicators by means of efficient public health policies and investment in health care might contribute significantly to the improvement of individuals' quality of life.

The reduction of mortality resulting from physical conditions such as infectious diseases, cardiovascular illnesses, and cancer, or mental conditions such as depression and suicide, for example, are important indicators of success in health promotion (Cutler, 2006). Improving such indicators results in a healthier population and better quality of life since fewer individuals will suffer severe and disabling illnesses.

### 2.1.9 Economic indicators – Income

Economic indicators play a relevant role in the assessment of the development of society, they provide a broad view of the economic health, and, consequently, their quality of life. Among such indicators, per capita income and family income emerge as fundamental measures that represent individuals' purchasing power and the collective wellbeing of a community.

The per capita income, calculated by dividing Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by the total number of inhabitants of a region, provides the mean income available per person. Although this is an invaluable metrics to assess wealth distribution, it does not provide a complete view of the economic reality since it might mask significant inequalities. For example, high per capita income might coexist with considerable income disparity between different social groups.

Considering family income is essential to obtain a more holistic understanding. This indicator accounts for all income sources within the family, thus providing a more precise perspective of the financial capacity of a domestic group. Stable family income can influence directly life standards and have significant implications for education, health and access to basic resources.

The relationship between economic indicators and quality of life is not only limited to financial quantification. Increased per capita and family income is frequently related to improvement in public services, infrastructure, and educational and professional opportunities. An economically active and prosperous population tends to experience a better quality of life, which is not only expressed in monetary terms, but also in access to social and cultural assets.

However, it is relevant to emphasize that simply increasing income will not automatically guarantee a better quality of life. The efficacy in income distribution, social policies, and economic development sustainability play crucial roles. In societies where income inequality is exacerbated, the economic growth benefits might be distorted, thus leaving a significant part of the population marginal to such progress.

In conclusion, economic indicators, mainly per capita and family income are vital tools to evaluate the conditions of a society and their quality of life. However, a broad approach must consider both numbers and equity in the distribution of resources and the implementation of social policies that guarantee that economic development is a means for collective wellbeing.

#### 2.1.10 Social Indicators – HDI

There is a perspective that a way of approaching complex social phenomena in a simple way is the use of indicators. Although there are methodological problems involved in the elaboration of such instruments, we cannot deny their broad use by hegemonic structures. Among them is the widely used HDI.

The human development index (HDI), introduced in the 1990s, became one of the best-known social development measures. With it the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) started to signal to several regions in the world the proposition of growth rather than production. This occurred because improvements in health conditions and the education of populations must be considered in the human development process.

According to Guimarães and Januzzi (2005, p. 75):

HDI is an index that seeks to measure the level of development of a country from a broader perspective rather than the simple relationship between the gross domestic product and the population. To achieve that, it incorporates longevity and education dimensions, combined using a simple arithmetic procedure. (our translation)

In general, this indicator is based on the admission that quality of life is human experience in the economic, health and education spheres, which we know is not enough. HDI does not include all dimensions of Quality of Life discussed in this work. It was created by economists and became a widely used indicator in both the international monetary sector and the large multinational conglomerates to suggest social public policies supposedly structuring and governmental.

## **2.2 Quality of life and lifestyle**

The authors Almeida, Casotti and Sena (2018), when addressing quality of life, call attention to the ideas put forward by Edgar Morin, who considers the “completeness” expressed in the WHO health concept, as the search for the whole, while it should be used to understand reality by means of complementarity, not pursuing univocal definitions.

For those authors, the viability of uniting several life dimensions is not evident in the WHO concept. For them, that concept deals with the idea of health by fragmenting it in the sum of parts rather than a complex unit that is influenced and modified by several factors. In the context of this previous understanding for health promotion, the construct they use, in the complexity that involves the theme, is lifestyle. It is part of a whole, influencing and being influenced by that whole, by means of positive or negative behaviors, which contribute to order and disorder, as part of individuals’ quality of life.

In other words, we realize that there are several focuses on the quality-of-life theme. Therefore, we find looks at health such as Nahas’s (2017) which emphasizes quality of life through lifestyle and defines it as a set of individual and socioenvironmental parameters that might lead most people to achieve positive health, longevity, or even the opposite, loss of quality of life and motivation.

Therefore, lifestyle presents some aspects over which one might have some control and modify them, such as a bad diet, excess alcohol consumption, high stress, social isolation, sedentarism,

among others which are also associated with diseases in several organs and systems of the human body. Thus, we observe that lifestyle becomes a broad concept, regardless of the conditions and opportunities that individuals have in each phase of their lives. Lifestyle refers to standards, choices, and behaviors that a person or a group of people adopt in their everyday lives, which can be modified, influenced, motivated, sharpened, or discouraged throughout their socialization process. There are many types of lifestyles, and they might vary widely depending on personal preferences, culture, environment, among other factors.

Different lifestyles are set according to each individual's life understanding and motivations, for instance, there are those who elect work as their existence target and structure all their motivations around it. On the other hand, there are others that seek spirituality to get motivated and give meaning to their lives. There are also those who establish their lifestyle based on search and economic, ideological, political, cultural, and social struggles. Finally, there are those who mix some of these styles.

However, when referring to lifestyles regarding a common life path which impacts unequivocally quality of life, regardless of personal choices, we can find in this common nuance four basic types of lifestyles. Such nuances are directly related to individuals' behavior when facing health factors to the extent which availability, need, or motivation are imposed. An individual's lifestyle can evolve over time and be influenced by several circumstances, mainly by their relationship with work, which might make it easier or more difficult. In this sense, they are systematized below:

**Active lifestyle:** people with this lifestyle tend to be physically active and incorporate regular exercise in their daily routine. This includes activities such as jogging, swimming, going to the gym and doing sports in general.

**Sedentary lifestyle:** people in this group tend to be less active and spend more time sitting, either at work or at home, in front of the television or computer screen.

**Healthy lifestyle:** this lifestyle emphasizes healthy eating habits, regular exercise, proper sleep, and avoid harmful behavior such as excess alcohol intake, smoking and the use of illegal or psychotropic drugs.

**Unhealthy lifestyle:** this is the opposite of a healthy lifestyle, it involves the choice of unhealthy food, lack of physical activity, lack of sleep, and excess alcohol and/or tobacco consumption.

Therefore, following Nahas's (2017) thoughts, it is not enough to understand the fragmentation of quality of life in domains since "lifestyle" is a determinant intertwined and inseparable element in individuals' lives.

Such habits, behaviors, and perceptions of quality of life have changed over the years according to that author and mainly when associated. However, this can only occur if individuals can consciously see some value in certain behavior that they should include or exclude and realize their capability to carry out such changes.

Despite that, it is not difficult to realize that many individuals seem to be more concerned with their professional, technical, and cultural development than with their wellbeing, leisure, and other factors related to quality of life. This is obnubilation that serves the purposes of productivism and the market paradox that is imposed on the existence of most individuals. Being creative and productive depends more and more on the lifestyle that will determine individuals' quality of life, but that operates according to the capital needs and its historical oscillations.

Timossi *et al.* (2008) analyzed the relationship between lifestyle and quality of life in workers of a federal organization controlling the federal tax charge and imports and exports in the state of Paraná, Brazil, They verified that a considerable number of the participants insisted in neglecting some or many aspects of their lifestyle and recognizing that there were influences and relationships between their lifestyle and their QoL, even if such influences were in the routine of those individuals and in their work organization, occurring all the time. Both *et al.* (2010), aiming to identify the level of

correlation between Quality of Work Life (QWL) and the lifestyle (LS) of physical education teachers, in a sample including 1645 teachers in southern Brazil, verified that although the participants seemed to be happy with the global evaluation of their Quality of Work Life, they were mainly unhappy with the remuneration.

Those authors highlight that low levels of satisfaction with work conditions, balanced time between leisure and work, and social integration in the school community are concerning matters in the participants' perception resulting from macro organizational aspects linked to the Education Secretariats of each state and micro organizational factors linked to the direction of school units. According to those authors, the evidence found regarding the level of association between the individual and socioenvironmental parameter constructs related to the teachers' life conditions were considered insufficient to establish a relationship between QWL and LS. Both *et al.* (2010) also reinforce that a lot of time is spent at work both at schools and in moments in which the teacher is at home preparing and organizing teaching activities. They also emphasize that their behavior inside and outside the work environment might interfere directly with their individual lifestyle.

In general, the workday is spent in the organization facilities and follows a constitutional legal framework, but there are cases in which the activities are developed outside it and there are people who manage to support themselves and their families by having more than one job. This theme is recurrent and evident when we face the challenge of universalizing and systematizing studies on and concepts in quality of life. At this point, the discussion about lifestyle merges with that on workload and stands out in relation to its quantity (amount of time spent) and also to its quality, that is, the work conditions and valuation. This confirms the usefulness of the DHM to analyze that the whole is not separated by these two nuances, on the contrary, together they create a single reality. Taking that into account, we refer to it in the following chapters of this book.



## CHAPTER III

### **Quality of Work Life (QWL)**

The expression Quality of Work Life first appeared in the literature in the 1950s. Cardoso (1999) describes well the background of this theme. Initiatives related to the search for QWL by organizations have occurred even considering the conventions of the International Labor Organization (ILO). They suggested legal adjustments to its member countries aiming to improve safety and health at work worldwide.

For Chiavenato (2004, p. 448), “total quality management in organizations depends mainly on the optimization of the human potential”. Therefore, this hegemonic discourse serving the capital domination over the workers, linked the quality-of-life debate to labor issues, according to that author.

In Castoriadis (1997), there is always rationality in capitalism. It aims, essentially, to increase workers’ productivity and reduce the costs of days off work. He points out the fact that total disappearance of human workforce would be excellent for the capital since both mechanical and smart machines require no other time or space outside work, that is, they have no other life dimensions outside work. However, even in postmodern society, capital still relies on live work for certain activities which depend on manual and mental skills. In other words, even in the current technological state, certain activities cannot be carried out by machines. What is left for the capital when it is not possible to eliminate the “human factor” in the production systems is the pragmatic management of such resources. A kind of theater of the humanization of work is set. It is interesting for the capital to understand and broaden pleasure for the workers’ motivation to increase their production.

That is why the construction of the discourse about Quality of Life is intertwined with the Quality of the Work Life (QWL).

Marques, J. F. A. and Marques, T. G. (2022, p. 51) understand this bond as an ideology that

is based on individualism which, in work relations, permeates workers' responsabilization for the problems experienced in the execution of their work, ignoring factors such as job market flexibilization marked by a context of precariousness.(our translation)

The renowned psychoanalyst Freud (1996) defines work as a type of control, in which the drives regarding pleasure are constantly (re)signified and the limits imposed are instinctive castration. For him, it is by means of instincts, called needs and desires, that we are going to find the key to the understanding of pleasure and suffering. The latter is the price to be paid for work, therefore, employees might experience pathogenic suffering rather than motivational pleasure. According to D'Oliveira *et al.* (2017), feelings of pleasure and suffering at work are dialectic and dynamic. Such feelings are included in the subjective dimension of individuals since they involve aspirations, values, desires and idealizations. These feelings suffer the interference of the organization in work and the labor process since the world of work is also dynamic and, in turn, suffers the influence of historical, political, economic and social aspects that are also in a spiral movement of changes. Pleasure is then conceptualized by those authors as a feeling of wellbeing and fulfilment which is related to their life experience, with each human being's desires, values, and social and psychological construction. Furthermore, other factors such as access to goods and consumption, the salary received, recognition of the work done, the feeling of the usefulness of work and the configuration of the social and economic structure in which they are inserted influence their perception of pleasure.

On the other hand, the same authors explain that suffering is the driving energy that does not find relief in work, it accumulates in the psychic system and provokes displeasure and tension. At the workplace, suffering appears when the individuals' aspirations, desires and values clash with those held by the work organization and also for the fact that the worker uses his/her defense

mechanisms to transform or adapt to such situations but does not obtain any success.

Persistent suffering is a determinant of getting ill. In this sense, suffering might generate psychosomatic and mental diseases when the work organization does not recognize it and neutralizes it when dialoguing with workers about their work conditions. We can obviously find the intrinsic relations of these domains since the one getting ill is the individual who suffers influences that might be related to their work as a cause or due to loss of opportunities.

Following this path, the study by Cardoso Júnior *et al.* (2018), for example, found positive relations of self-perception of regular stress levels among professors of law in private higher education with their multiple jobs (heavier workload), thus confirming their statistical correlations with a worse lifestyle, the occurrence of silent diseases, and poor academic performance.

It might be intriguing to think about this measure or conceptual construction by means of their feelings and meanings. However, we can think, using the proposed method, starting by the common element of antagonism to domains and the whole phenomenon or QoL. One proposal would be to use one element responsible for the rupture with the perception of satisfactory rather than the ideal for each domain, for example. And then, what would be this element, or category? Some authors use the Stress category to ascribe meaning to this antagonism. Among them, Norbert Elias, a contemporary English sociologist, points out that there is a broad development in civilization, which starts from positive postures of good living to more complex issues such as changes in social relationships and the understanding of the human being. For Elias (1984), personal tensions lead to a sensation of greater tension and stress, and self-control would be part of human beings' nature, but once its threshold is broken in any domain, quality-of-life loss occurs.

Another author, Habermas (1989) considers that in the world of work, people always act so that they can remain there and sublimate all aggression. Such mechanized relation of self-control, typical of

social evolution, leads to stress. Agreements, deadlines and competition, the pressure of structural unemployment, low salaries and the fear of being unemployed are veiled expressions of capitalism that lead to the accumulation of tensions and contribute to or cause such stress. This is where the materialism of this antagonism resides.

The presence of historicity, which is determined by economic moments or contexts of culture, specific of each situation of societies reveals that capitalist crises are, therefore, the background for such stress and the workers' reduced quality of life in those moments. In that search, studies with a historical cut must evaluate stress in each domain of the individuals' quality of life, in the measurements of each economic crisis, so that this component can also be established. However, what is inferred from these procedures is polemic since if individuals can absorb or sublimate certain degree of stress and adapt to it without compromising their QoL, this means that stress is not a category with a diametrically antagonist meaning as proposed. Thus, another theoretical tension is included, namely, if stress is unavoidable in the capitalist world, mainly in workers, we must assume that there is certain unit or category that limits the content or level of stress, which is then opposed to QoL categories.

Freud (1974) also explained that individuals' mental processes work guided to seek pleasure and avoid unpleasant feelings. However, difficulties of the external world and the never-ending unpleasant experiences transform desire in the most modest reality into suffering. In Dejours's (1992) accurate conception, suffering is the individuals' struggle against forces that push them away from their desires. According to that author, most of the individuals' suffering is related to the need to work or during the execution of their tasks. Those conflicts, many times, result from adaptation attempts between the organization and the individuals' desire. Work organization exercises some action on individuals, thus affecting them. That author states that suffering starts when the "man-work organization relationship is blocked" (Dejours, 1992, p. 52).

Taking that into account, we can understand that stress is not always seen as an antagonistic agent in the search for quality of

life. According to Selye (1975), if stress is a non-specific organic response of the body to demanding situations, its moderate presence is normal adaptation to the everyday demands. However, when excessive, it becomes a manifestation of suffering with physical and emotional reactions of varied symptoms. Therefore, suffering could be characterized as an antagonistic category to quality of life due to its physical, psychic, social and environmental (work) domains.

Obviously, we have not exhausted the movement to understand the phenomenon, but we certainly contributed to the possibility of employing Marx's method in its systematization and for the universality of its understanding. The conceptual understanding of the quality-of-life phenomenon must be based on the dialectic movement to reach such an abstraction level that only after that one can understand what is left of it, once its real concreteness is defined.

No one can think that work is always pleasurable or free from any suffering. Work deals with the imposition of the capitalist world that places the individual more and more squeezed between the ideal image and a completely different reality. What is observed is that the quality-of-life phenomenon can be studied and understood by employing the method proposed in this work since it helped us find a universal characteristic, that is, its direct relation with work conditions.

It would be a central dimension from which all other dimensions irradiate, and which also includes the subjectivity perspective, always referred to in the quality-of-life phenomenon. And due to the enunciated subjectivity, the perception of reality from one's own experiences, senses, and meanings, there are also multiple theoretical models for the analysis of the QWL category.

The pioneer models according to their authors are as follows: Walton (1973), Hackman and Oldham (1974), Westley (1979), Werther Júnior and Davis (1983), and Nadler and Lawler (1983). In Brazil, Walton's model is the most disseminated and widely used. Lirio *et al.* (2020), based on their readings, published the illustrative chart below, which represents Walton's QWL analysis model and its dimensions.

**Chart 2** – Walton’s QWL analysis model and its dimensions

Dimensions	QWL indicators
1.Fair and proper reward	Internal and external equity, fair reward, productivity gain sharing, and proportionality between salaries.
2.Work conditions	Reasonable workload, safe and healthy physical environment, insalubrity absence.
3.Skill use and development	Autonomy, relative self-control, multiple skills.
4.Opportunities of growth and safety	Career development, personal growth, salary advancement perspective, job security.
5.Social integration in the organization	Absence of prejudice, equality, mobility, relationship, and community sense.
6.Constitutionalism	Worker’s protection laws, personal privacy, freedom of expression, impartial treatment, and labor rights.
7.Work and total life space	Balanced role at work, time stability, few geographical changes, and family leisure time.
8.Work social relevance in life	Company image, company social responsibility, responsibility for products, and employment practices

Source: Lirio *et al.* (2020).

This model is considered more complete because it has a higher number of dimensions than the others and includes the measurement of the way indirect influences, not caused by the work, determine it. However, it is worth noting that other models were not validated in Brazil, they were validated in the United States of America. Furthermore, they seem to frustrate the expectancy that they could predict the entirety of the Human Quality of Life and became mere organizational evaluation instruments.

This is not the view adopted in this work since we focus on the common starting point, if not from all, but most people, those who need to think about work to exist, survive or fulfill themselves in some way within a State or a Capitalist Production System.

The intention is to reach the whole of QoL by means of QWL by the analysis method, finding out its universal validity. This time, the greatest search is to overcome obstacles of the subjectivities of this struggle, for the necessary and small contribution to the reconfiguration of a global humanized organization and development system.

It seems to be a light to be shed as a thesis, which is the level of responsibility and responsabilization of individuals, in the antagonism between pleasure and suffering, which might be the

central elements of the quality-of-life global phenomenon, and the way it connects directly all the individuals' dimensions with their job(s). A life with better time quality (kairós<sup>2</sup>) is built in the resistance to production modes and life control that perpetuate submission, voluntary servitude for a greater amount (Chronos) of life in accumulation (La boétie, 2004).

### **3.1 QWL, globalization, new technologies and careers**

Globalization is a process through which world spaces acquired an aspect of unity. Its initial mark is linked to the great navigations of the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, which configured in the minds of the men of those times not only the image of a planet, but also the origin of the commercial circulation of goods and greater capital accumulation. With capitalism, the class division and consequent paid jobs appeared.

The more and more organized advancement of capital, beyond its original borders, strengthened this movement that favored the flow of goods, investments, information, technologies, people, cultures, and all kinds of interchange and transnational influences. We reached the time when we are practically fully connected to each other, wherever we are.

According to Engels (1988), technological innovations generate new ways of work division and changes in the quality of social relationships. For Santos (2012), in the huge number of transformations we have witnessed, money power invades the human life spheres, turning interpersonal relationships into things, faded by the logic of such power that can buy almost everything.

Following this understanding, those already affected by increased demands regarding their qualification and competence,

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2 Kairós is a Greek term for the “right moment” or “proper time”, representing qualitative time. It opposes Chronos, which refers to the chronological measurable time. According to La boétie (2004), Kairós involves the favorable and decisive instant of action, frequently linked to a unique opportunity or the divine intervention in the course of events.

do not recognize themselves as a unit, they are alienated and start to dispute resources, thus submitting to this vulnerability. This is how individuals become hostages of productivity and meritocratic policies as a means of market survival.

When reflecting upon this theme, Ramos (1999) reminds us that globalization has one face worldwide, as it has in Brazil. It broadens social exclusion since it gradually shrinks the formal job market and creates a universe of unemployed individuals or people in underemployment.

Moreover, in the context of global hegemonic crisis, vulnerabilities and uncertainties are evidenced in large portions of the active population. As previously mentioned, a relationship is always noticeable between quality of life and the economic cycles the job market goes through.

Considering such perspective, in fact, these harmful occurrences are highlighted. Currently, there is such a concerning situation from the Quality of work life (QWL) precariousness standpoint, namely, the so-called uberization<sup>3</sup>.

In this type of work the individual bears all the material costs and risks of the workplace, many times, without minimum guarantees, without fixed working hours and, at the same time, ruled by or under the implicit subordination of certain intermediary companies, market or technology mediators, for example. For Fontes (2017), in this situation, workers become providers of the means of production, are responsible for its maintenance and update, and bear all consequences that might arise from this relationship. Companies, in turn, tend not to be guided or reached by collective agreements and the pact occurs at the individuals' level, thus further weakening workers.

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3 This term derives from a company that corresponds to a global digital platform that proposes a pact between service providers and users. In practice, this is a precarious contract characterized by informal outsourcing without employment guarantees or a defined workload. The company connects the individuals in the relationship and collects a percentage of the payment for the service rendered.

Technological mediation proposes negotiation spaces and virtual contracts that search consumers and where the work value is dependent on the acceptance of certain conditions, this makes workers more vulnerable.

Historical forms change, but the same DHM challenging essence remains, that is, the surplus extraction logic by means of workforce cost reduction, increasing precariousness of professions, and work intensification in a perverse and alienating way, as pointed out by Silva (2019).

Fontes (2017) draws attention to the fact that surviving is a devastating and urgent demand. For that author, such need is dramatically disguised by capitalism as freedom. Even during crises, the economic dimension overlaps other life dimensions, deepens the destruction of employment protections historically conquered, imposing itself using justifications such as the need for an austerity self-supported environment.

This seems to be a type of exploitation by means of ideological control that wants to enchant as something modern, entrepreneurial, but, in fact, those are ways of exploring used by corporations that become more and more unscrupulous. Sennett (1999) uses the term “new capitalism” because it is a moment with characteristics that reformulate individuals’ work, personal life, and character. Beck (2001) employs the expression “second modernity”, which transfers the industrial model centered on certainty and safety of national states, and establishes an open system, with greater risks, insecurities and uncertainties.

It is highly likely that in this new reality, and for this reason, the search for a significant labor career is not only limited to professional success, but also to the positive influence that this choice might have in people’s lives. The relationship between the job chosen and general wellbeing is a theme that has been increasingly discussed since individuals recognize the importance of continuously balancing their professional lives with other aspects such as health, relationships, arts, religion, and leisure, for example.

Taking that into account, Lirio *et al.* (2020) studied different generations regarding their perception of quality of working life and concluded that the generation characterized by the globalization phenomenon emphasized greater relevance of the work dimension in relation to life than previous generations. When making decisions related to career, it is fundamental to consider more than the financial aspect, considering, for example, the impact the profession might have on the individuals' daily routine and on the long-term perspectives. Careers that offer flexibility, a healthy work environment, and personal growth opportunities, many times contribute significantly to a better quality of life. Furthermore, work satisfaction still plays a crucial role in the quality-of-life equation. Choosing a profession aligned with passions, abilities and personal values increases motivation and reduces stress and suffering associated with activities that do not meet the individuals' expectations.

Balancing professional and personal life has become a central aspect of quality of life. This refers to professions that favor a culture of respect for free time and set healthy limits, thus promoting a work environment that values mental and physical health. This choice becomes essential for a virtuous life.

However, it is worth noting that the relationship between profession and quality of life is complex and unique for each individual. What is good for one might not work for someone else. For this reason, a reflective and personalized approach is required when making professional decisions.

To sum up, the choice of a profession might play a significant role in quality of life. When pursuing careers that offer more than financial stability such as personal satisfaction, balanced work and lifetime, and a healthy work environment enable individuals to find a path that fulfils them professionally, which contributes to a fulfilled and satisfactory life. It is quite common for research to point out that such desired virtue is considered the main goal when individuals think about their careers.

This confirms that the human vital drive occurs via antagonism when seeking pleasure and distancing from all types of suffering in

life nuances, and professional choices are based on his search, in which remuneration is a means rather than an end for those choices.

Our proposal agrees with Orpen's (1981, p.4) ideas indicating "that a high-quality work life is the one that enables psychological growth and experimenting feelings of wellbeing", that is, one that provides freedom from internal tensions. For this reason, we firmly believe in the need for approaching the quality-of-life theme in schools even before professional training or higher education. This is necessary because currently, socially distanced work and the growing automation are elements that are consolidated and widely spread.

According to bauman (2000), modernity is fluid, and we are subjected to constant changes in the different domains of life and interpersonal relationships are also more fluid. The internet of things has exposed us to greater tension, mainly related to employment, and, consequently, has become a determinant factor for Quality of Life. The greatest challenge we are imposed is to validate knowledge for the new work relationships and for the contemporary work organization.

### **3.2 Gender and Quality of Work Life**

The theorization on individuals' gender does not refer merely to the biological aspects of men and women, it is a broader and more relevant theme. Understanding accurately what the debate about gender represents is fundamental and leads to the understanding of several identities and expectations which in truth are socially built. This debate must be present in classrooms and in the social life of everyone.

Unlike sex that refers to biological and physical characteristics, which distinguish men, women, and intersexual individuals, gender is a construction that goes beyond that. It varies according to different cultures, times and specific contexts. It entails the expressions and roles socially ascribed to each of the sexes, not only does it influence the way individuals feel about themselves, but it also determines social expectations in relation to behaviors considered suitable for each gender. This broader and more inclu-

sive perspective seeks to defy strict notions of gender and promote acceptance and respect for the diversity of personal experiences.

Thus, gender conception really is a dynamic and complex social construction that permeates all spheres of life from personal and family relationships to social, political and economic institutions. Understanding and questioning gender norms is essential to promote equality, diversity and inclusion in all areas of society, as well as to challenge and overcome harmful stereotypes and limiting expectations associated with some type of gender.

Gender intersectionality related to Quality of Work Life (QWL) includes a complex variety of issues that go beyond salary disparities and access to professional opportunities between sexes. Women, for example, face unique obstacles due to strict gender norms, prejudice and institutionalized stereotypes that influence their career choices, progression in the organizational hierarchy and experiences in the workplace. Another example is the possibility of getting pregnant, which punishes women due to social expectations related to motherhood and the challenges faced when trying to balance work and family life.

In addition, the representation of women in sectors that are traditionally ruled by men such as technology, engineering and finances, is still rather low, revealing structural and cultural barriers that perpetuate gender occupational segregation. Not only does this occupational segregation limit women's career options, but it also contributes to the undervaluation of jobs historically associated with female professionals, thus resulting in salary disparity and lack of recognition.

Oliveira *et al.* (2012, p. 741-747) analyzed the work conditions of female higher education professors in the health area in Vitória, in the state of Espírito Santo, and their implications in their health and quality of life. They reported that "the professors are not spared from global demands such as extra class tasks, long workdays, accomplishment of tasks in very short time, multiple jobs and classroom workload". According to those authors, research reported absence of leisure with consequent sleep disorders that

favor psychological diseases, excess work, significant changes in the way it is organized, harm to social and family interaction, all that influencing their health and quality of life.

Antogla and Maia (2014) verified the occurrence of significant differences in men's and women's perception of the dimensions composing QWL, in the perspective of Ergonomics applied to Quality of Work Life. According to those authors, women have a more negative perception in relation to men of aspects related to work conditions, work organization and global quality of life.

Gender diversity in the workplace is not only related to increasing female representativeness in leadership positions, it also requires some commitment with the promotion of an inclusive work environment, where all gender identities are respected and valued. The implementation of gender equality policies such as transparent and fair salary revisions, mentorship and skill development programs, in addition to the creation of safe spaces for discussions about gender and diversity are essential steps to create more egalitarian and welcoming labor cultures, improve the workplace and, consequently, the quality of work life.

Mattos *et al.* (2015), in their review article, discussed inequalities and gender in the perspective of gender, work and health relations. Those authors presented discussions based on the following categories: sex and gender differences, gender and work relationships, gender iniquity and inequality in health, sexuality and gender diversity, gender violence, and gender and public health.

In the category sex and gender differences, those authors reported that the discussion about the genesis of such concepts dates back to sometime around the 17th century, when reproductive organs were differentiated in linguistic terms and gained absolute centrality in the definition of differences between men and women. This occurred because women, at that time, were represented as mothers or potentially for their reproductive capacity.

Likewise, in the gender and work relationships category, those authors discussed that male identity is anchored in work and that work is a conduct considered necessary for men, so that they are recognized as dignified and good character individuals.

Regarding the labor reality experienced by women, on the other hand, they suffered remarkable gender influences, not only in aspects related to double shift, but also the distribution of tasks and work positions.

Gender inequalities and iniquities are discussed regarding concepts, which, according to the same authors, respectively “can be understood as a factor inherent in the historical, social and cultural process” and “correspond to some injustice related to access to better life and health conditions in society, lack of opportunities, and egalitarian treatment in diverse societies” (Mattos *et al.*, 2015, p. 272, our translation). Therefore, according to those authors, the greater social inequalities are, the greater gender inequalities are.

Ceribeli, H.b., Ceribeli, M. C. b. and Ferreira (2016) analyzed differences in QWL of men and women in organizations in the cities of Ouro Preto and Mariana – Minas Gerais and found out that women are less satisfied than men in relation to salary, opportunities of professional growth, recruitment and selection criteria (both internal and external) and the possibility of taking part in decision committees. According to those authors, women tend to be less satisfied regarding the interference of work in their personal life and the support received from colleagues.

These factors call attention to gender diversity challenges in organizations such as equal pay and opportunities of professional growth between genders; work flexibilization, linked to a policy of support to workers’ children so that women can balance family and professional demands; and implementation of a policy of women’s inclusion in decision boards. In addition, raising awareness about gender violence in the workplace, including sexual harassment and discrimination, is essential to guarantee safety and wellbeing to all workers. Robust policies of prevention and combat of such violence include efficient reporting mechanisms and regular training for workers and leaders. These are fundamental tools in the promotion of safer work environments freed from discrimination, to improve quality of work life.

Ultimately, gender equality in the workplace is a matter of labor or social justice. It is also intrinsically linked to quality of

life in the workplace of those vulnerable and consequently change their performance and their appreciation within organizations and in the social context as a whole.

Believing in respect to diversity and gender inclusion strengthens corporate culture and boosts innovation, creativity and productivity because it promotes diverse perspectives and unique experiences in the workplace. Only a continuous commitment to gender equality will result in the construction of more egalitarian and sustainable work environments, and happier people.

It is not difficult to find research data revealing such inequality in working hours, overload and labor appreciation considering the female gender. To confirm such inequality, Cardoso Júnior (2022), in his master's dissertation, analyzes inequality in stress observed between male and female professionals working in higher education in the southwest of bahia-brazil in the context of the covid-19 pandemic.

When social isolation peaked, women were significantly more affected emotionally due to the overload of work in that context. Multitasking and the accumulated or socio-culturally expectancy ascribed to the female gender were extremely explored during the pandemic mainly in the domestic environment where they started to work remotely. That author considered that such occurrences were elements contributing to those professionals' accumulated stress and impoverished health.

Taking all that into account, we defend gender equity related to employment, career and equal pay, favoring flexibility and support to all gender identities in the workplace, to reduce stress and the appearance of illnesses, thus contributing to better quality of life in the workplace for all.

Public policies must be consolidated to guarantee safety and wellbeing to all gender identities, mainly female ones, in the workplace to protect professionals' mental health by means of general and psychological support to ensure balance between work, education, health and spirituality. This should result in balance in personal life and its resulting relations that make up societies.



## **CHAPTER IV**

### **Quality of Life (QoL) and Society**

The search for quality of life goes beyond the individual's sphere reaching the collective environment, where fundamental principles are expressed and play a crucial role. In the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the United Nations in 1948, global standards are set for dignity, freedom and wellbeing of all human beings. Therefore, it influences social, economic and cultural issues that impact directly the quality of life in society.

This collective quality of life embraces a holistic view and goes beyond economic metrics, thus covering aspects such as social justice, equality of opportunities, and access to basic resources. In its opening, that Declaration emphasizes the importance of peace in the world as a must-have for human wellbeing, the basis for the kind of society where quality of life is measured by both economic and individual development, equity and inclusion.

According to that document, article 25, the right to a proper standard of living is highlighted, including food, clothing, housing, and medical assistance. Such recognition confirms the importance of guaranteeing that basic needs are catered for so that all members of society can enjoy minimally a dignifying quality of life. In this context, social programs, efficient public policies and poverty eradication are essential to promote a type of society where no individual is abandoned. Furthermore, the Declaration emphasizes the right to education (article 26), thus recognizing it as an essential means for the full development of one's personality and active participation in society. The kind of society that values and promotes education contributes to economic growth, cultural and social development, and favors a high degree of collective quality of life.

Promoting gender equality, as highlighted in article 2 of that Declaration, is another vital element for the improvement of quality

of life in society. Gender equality meets the fundamental principles of human rights, boosts social and economic development, and creates a more solid basis for a fair community supported by rights and guarantees.

The protection of civil and political rights, as provided for in articles 3, 5 and 21, is essential for a peaceful society. The active participation of citizens in decision making, their freedom of speech, and access to impartial justice are intrinsic components in a society where quality of life is built on pillars of respect and true democracy.

To sum up, there is already a confirmed and formal collection of ethical and legal principles to promote quality of life in societies. Such principles, when incorporated in public policies and national social practices, contribute to the construction of a community that values human dignity, social justice and freedom, thus creating a suitable environment for collective quality of life that transcends individual barriers.

This is a beautiful normative text, whose implementation seems to be in the field of utopia. The utopia of a quality of life for all. However, what has been done regarding the access to the equipment that makes it work? The “invisible hand” of capital wants that quality of life is seen as a synonym of consumption, but it is notably impossible for all in practice because the technical advancement has not reduced people’s needs, in fact, it has created more and different demands.

The simple observation of violence, famine, inequality, and fear in the world ruined all faith and showed that planning power is in crisis regarding the market laws. For Buarque (1993), as a consequence, equality was put aside, freedom is endangered, and brotherhood was destroyed by the power of individuals who create systematic control to threaten civilization. On the other hand, new fights are supported such as those related to the environment and sustainable development, gender rights, defense of culture and search for spirituality.

Regarding the latter, capital already seeks new inspiration to ruin the targeted socialism, thus revealing that there is a spiral way in the humankind trajectory, one that is envisaged when thought from a perspective based on the DHM. When authoritarianism gains force, the search for quality of life starts to depend on the fight for democracy.

Even respecting those with utopic feelings, what feeds science is concrete, and the scientists' work is to make some ideology come true. This work should start in the first social environment outside the family. It starts at school, mediated by the scientists of education.

#### **4.1 Culture, leisure and spirituality for QoL**

We already mentioned that the search for quality of life goes beyond physical limits and enters the culture, leisure, and spiritual fields. It establishes deep connections between these elements which impact significantly human wellbeing. A holistic approach, considering emotional, socio-political, and spiritual dimensions is fundamental for the full understanding of what living a quality life means.

Therefore, the relationship between quality of life and cultural aspects is intrinsic. Culture shapes our values, beliefs, and traditions, and directly influences our worldview and sense of identity. Researchers such as Diener and Suh (2003) emphasize that there is a strong connection with the cultural origin that might contribute to a better satisfaction with life.

Cultural diversity enriches human experience and plays a vital role in the promotion of mental health. Accepting and valuing different cultural expressions promotes an environment of mutual respect, thus strengthening social bonds and contributing to quality of life (Chirkov, 2009). Multiculturalism, as explained by Juliana Santilli (2008), as a political project, points out the celebration or recognition of cultural differences and allows the construction of a common life in spite of the differences. As regards leisure, whose impact is many times underestimated, it is also an essential component in quality of life. According to Godbey, Sasidharam

and Willits (2005), well-planned and meaningful leisure activities are associated with higher levels of satisfaction with life.

Having hobbies, taking part in sports and recreational activities not only provide immediate pleasure, but also contribute to a healthy balance between work and personal life. Therefore, leisure is considered a pillar of individuals' physical and mental health (Cembranel *et al.*, 2021).

For Pessoa and Nascimento (2008), leisure is included in quality of work life, if we take into consideration the multidimensional character of quality of life. According to those authors, organizations should develop an atmosphere that favors individual and institutional development, so that workers are aware of their role as main collaborators within them. They highlight that

[...] an institution might be defined as being socially responsible since it would be acting beyond expectations by inserting leisure in their planning as a possible technology for the development of a singular management, making the work life significant, that is, having quality in the workplace (Pessoa; Nascimento, 2008, p. 32, our translation).

Barrozo *et al.* (2012) state that in the context of disabled individual, sports, culture and leisure overcome the promotion of quality of life and wellbeing since these are the means through which individuals develop and exercise their citizenship and appropriate their physical and social environment. The issue addressed by those authors extends and goes beyond the context studied by them. Thinking about leisure as a strategy to promote health, wellbeing, and quality of life has increased the search for urban spaces that provide activities that promote such constructs. According to Silva *et al.* (2013, p. 3),

[...] leisure spaces are suitable health promotion environments for their function of refreshing and promoting wellbeing in urban spaces, helping people to develop healthy habits and contributing to individuals' emotional, social, physical and cultural aspects. (our translation)

For Hourcade and Gutierrez (2004), the importance of the ludic dimension and leisure activities is undeniable in relation to the improvement of individuals' quality of life. However, according to those authors, transforming leisure into public policy action is quite complex, not only due to the discussion about the definition of leisure, but because it is a specific area that competes for space and funds in the broader context of a political, party or personal project, at the municipal, state and federal levels.

Several documents such as the Federal Constitution, the Statute of the Child and Adolescent, and the law providing for the National Elderly Policy define leisure as a social right, and it is always found in the category addressing health and its guarantees, including the search for wellbeing, pleasure and quality of life. Regarding spirituality, regardless of specific religious associations, it appears as another relevant factor in the search for a meaningful life. Authors such as Emmons and Paloutzian (2003) emphasize that spirituality is positively correlated with subjective wellbeing and emotional resilience. Finding meaning and purpose in life is an essential dimension of quality of life, and spirituality, many times, plays a central role in this process. There are studies proving that exercising spirituality, in relation to faith in the abstract, which is intangible and superior to human reasoning, promotes physiological and immunological positive changes in individuals.

[...] we understand that the quality-of-life field might become a mediator between the health field and that of religious/spiritual issues, thus facilitating the development of spiritually-based health interventions, for at least two reasons: for being a more recent area of knowledge and, therefore, less prejudiced in relation to the spirituality/religiousness research; and because the quality-of-life construct is broader and multidimensional, thus requiring the engagement of professionals from different areas of knowledge for its better understanding, which makes it transdisciplinary (Panzini *et al.*, 2007, p. 105-115, our translation).

According to Melo *et al.* (2015), religiousness might be a health and quality-of-life factor or not, depending on the individuals' social, cultural, and subjective characteristics, in addition to other unknown aspects. "Spirituality has the potential of providing human beings with authentic serenity and happiness, depending on how it is experienced by individuals; thus, it is not a general rule" (Melo *et al.*, 2015, p. 460, our translation).

Dias and Pais-Ribeiro (2018, p. 601) believe

[...] that spirituality might play an extremely relevant role in the elderly's physical and mental health and quality of life; its practice seems to impact positively the way older individuals realize and face the events experienced in this phase of their lives.

According to those authors, for older individuals, religiousness and spirituality are essential tools in their lives, since they use them as a strategy to face several situations of crises and illnesses.

Farinha *et al.* (2018) carried out an integrative review of literature and considered individual aspects of the articles since they were analyzed in different contexts. They observed a consensus that religiousness and spirituality influence directly adolescents' perception of quality of life.

Therefore, the harmonious integration of these elements – culture, leisure and spirituality – is crucial to reach a healthy balance in the search for quality of life. The research reported by Koenig (2012) highlights that balanced spirituality might be a resource to deal with stress and promote mental health.

Therefore, quality-of-life promotion requires policies and practices that recognize the importance of cultural diversity, incentivize access to enriching leisure activities and respect the plurality of spiritual expressions in society. Not only do the holistic approaches that integrated these aspects and spaces improve individual wellbeing, but they also contribute to healthier communities and more resilient societies.

In the contemporary context, Emotional Capitalism (Illouz, 2007) appears as a sophisticated strategy to influence individuals'

choices, desires and behaviors aiming to meet market requirements and maximize surplus. By means of marketing campaigns, targeted publicity, and even using social networks, individual and collective emotions are shaped and explored in favor of commercial and political objectives. The pursuit of profit in contemporary capitalism many times takes advantage of the relationship established between emotions and consumption, thus promoting feelings of needs, desire and gratification that favor the acquisition of products and services. In such context, exploitation of emotions is not limited to the emotional aspect but is rather entangled in a complex way with the market and work dynamics.

A critical reflection upon such interaction is, therefore, required to understand how human emotions are instrumentalized and even commercialized in the contemporary context. Questioning the bases and effects of this new tentacle of “emotions” becomes essential for a broader analysis of the complex relationship between economy, society, and subjectivity in the contemporary world.

Raising awareness of such dynamics might be the first step towards a more ethical and equitable approach to the interactions between capital, emotions and individual and collective wellbeing. Manipulation of the masses by means of their emotions seeking to meet the job market demands and surplus, is carried out in a subliminal way.

The main point here is that there is the search for full quality of life involving understanding and the conscious incorporation of culture, leisure and human spirituality. By recognizing the interconnection of these elements and promoting practices that nurture each dimension, we might be able to create a solid basis for a meaningful and balanced life. Such a holistic approach enriches individual journeys, and strengthens social bonds, thus contributing to vibrant communities and healthier societies.

## **4.2 Quality of Life and Sustainability**

Seeking quality of life in a world that is more and more interconnected involves a deep understanding of the complex

relationships between ecosystems and their sustainability. When facing environmental and social challenges, promoting quality of life requires a broader approach, which integrates personal and environmentally sustainable practices in a globalized context.

For Rocha (2020, p. 9), the concept of sustainability “can be understood as a process or a state of keeping certain level for as long as possible”. Having sustainability or living with sustainability might mean relating to our life pillars in a way that keep their quantity and quality safe and renewable. Also, according to that author, the environmental leader and historian Marina Silva points out accurately the existence of seven pillars of sustainability, namely, economic, social, cultural, ethical, environmental, political and aesthetic<sup>4</sup>.

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4 Marina Silva explains the existence of seven pillars as follows: Economic sustainability – “Transforming comparative advantages into competitive advantages. We must be able to transform natural resources and goods and services produced into improvement in individuals’ quality of life, into health, education, entertainment, that is, dignifying and full life for everybody. Ultimately, a better world to live in; Social sustainability – “Balancing equity principles, seeking to make all people’s lives worth living”; Environmental sustainability – “Using resources in such a way that the dignifying and full life needs can be satisfied without compromising the dignifying and full life of those that have not been born yet”; Cultural sustainability – “If we are not able to have a development model that preserves diversity, we have a problem. There is no innovation in repeating the same, innovation can only occur in diversity. Without it, we have “cultural erosion”; Ethical sustainability – “We are beings that care for each other, the ones who are here now and those to come. This is called social bond or intergeneration alliance. This is not resolved with a technique, it is resolved with ethics. If I do not care about the ones that will be born, I might destroy resources created over millions and millions of years in some decades only for the sake of profit. This is the end of the human species; Political sustainability – “This refers to what we are doing here. People are meeting, debating, trying to create a consensus, a convergence space so that we all can move forward in a different direction. If natural resources are finite, we must work to produce more with a lower volume of natural resources. There is no savior. It is not ‘a’, ‘b’, or ‘c’. We have to adopt it as value. We usually want to outsource our problems. We like to deceive ourselves. We want somebody else to promise that the corruption problem will be solved. I am sorry, but corruption is not a problem of ‘x’, ‘y’, ‘z’, ‘a’, ‘b’, or ‘c’\*. Corruption is our problem, This is political sustainability. While corruption is the “x’s” problem, we will have corruption. When it becomes our

It seems relevant to emphasize that living with sustainability gains connotations in its tense relationship with capital and labor. A sustainable practice occurs following a plan when prospecting economy, development and individual securities. A labor self-determination that is not compensatory might induce exhaustion and consequently early appearance of diseases, mainly when seeking to support a utopian lifestyle, that is, originating from the submission to the exaggerated consumption context, one that is superfluous and unnecessary for lacking plausibility, reasonability and being out of proportion when considering real needs. We believe that sustainability must start from this awareness.

Therefore, it becomes clear that individual quality of life is linked to how healthy the environments where human beings live (and work) are and, consequently, how healthy the ecosystems that support life on our planet are.

The ecosystem services theory, proposed by Costanza *et al.* (1997), highlights how the benefits supplied by ecosystems such as food, clean water, and climate regulation are fundamental for the human beings' wellbeing. Environmental degradation, often resulting from unsustainable practices, threatens directly quality of life, especially in communities that depend on natural resources. According to the North American National Research Council, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) gives the best definition for sustainability. That agency understands it as a condition to "create and maintain conditions under which man and nature can exist in productive harmony, and fulfill

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problem, I am sure that there will be a quality for Brazilian institutions; Aesthetic sustainability – "Some things have a symbolic value not purely economic". The Sugar Loaf (Rio de Janeiro) might not have liquidity, but none of us will let it be destroyed and turned into crushed stone. This is aesthetic sustainability". The 7 pillars of sustainability were explained by Marina Silva in a lecture at the EXAME Forum, in São Paulo, the former minister of the environment stated that the world has been experiencing several crises at the same time (Nogueira, 2011, our translation).

\* We substituted the names indicated in the lecture with small letters to enable a timeless perspective to the category proposed by Marina Silva (Rocha, 2020, p. 11 ).

the social, economic, and other requirements of present and future generations” (National Research Council, 2011, p. 28).

In societies marked by consumerism, predation and exclusion, instruments are needed to guarantee the effectiveness of the right to a balanced and healthy environment. In Brazil, the Federal Constitution of 1988 consecrated environmental rights in the category of fundamental social rights. However, in practice, the world witnesses the sacrifice of environmental assets without due public debate. Even society, due to the lack of space for discussion and decision-making, puts itself at risk for not being able to sustain the new demands of the human being-nature relationship (Beck, 2001).

The transition into a more sustainable society is vital in the search for long-lasting quality of life. Authors such as Sachs (2015) emphasize the importance of sustainable approaches that consider the three pillars of sustainability, namely, environmental, social, and economic. Practices such as circular economy, promotion of renewable energy and the efficient management of natural resources are highly relevant to guarantee the continuity of quality of life in a global context.

Although globalization is thought of as a phenomenon that connects the world in novel ways, it has started to be considered in relation to the significant sustainability and quality-of-life challenges posed to all beings on the planet.

A report by the United Nations (UN, 2022) presented critical increase in climate effects. In the last nine years, the highest temperature levels were recorded on the planet. Global warming provoked heat waves and extreme drought in addition to floods in several parts of the world, threatening lives and survival means, mainly affecting the most economically vulnerable individuals.

There are studies proving that workers in family farming, who are most women, and those in civil construction, who are most men, have their quality of life affected and their health exposed to greater chances of getting ill due to climate effects (Rosa; Lima, 2019). This has been called climate stress or climate injustice.

Such unstoppable exploitation of natural resources to meet consumption demands, which is most times concentrated in specific regions, might result in disproportionate environmental impacts

and social inequalities (Leichenko; O'Brien, 2008) even in other parts of the world that are geographically distant. Therefore, a sustainable approach in the globalization era requires thorough consideration of interconnections between social, economic, legal and environmental systems.

Quality-of-life promotion in such context requires individual actions as well as global responsibility. Authors such as Beck (2001) highlight the need for an ethical law that recognizes the planet interdependences and promotes citizen participation at the local and global levels. Environmental awareness combined with coordinated actions at the individual, community and government levels, is indispensable to face environmental degradation challenges and guarantee sustainable quality of life for future generations.

Such transformation requires a fundamental change in the global mindset and, again, education plays a fundamental role in this process. It can provide individuals with knowledge about the ecosystems' interconnections, sustainability, and globalization. Public awareness, as explained by Stern (2000), is a catalyst of behavior change and the development of societies that are environmentally friendly.

Therefore, seeking individual and collective quality of life in an interconnected world requires deep understanding of such interactions. Holistic approaches, public policies and citizen education emerge as crucial elements in the promotion of balanced human development and planet preservation. This is a legal, ethical and practical issue that demands coordinated actions at all levels, from local to global, to guarantee a prosperous future with a good quality of life for all beings on earth.

It makes no difference whether human beings are bad by nature or whether they are a blank slate when they are born, both can be freely educated, they might understand that the meaning of life is not full unless there is cooperation. If work and production are part of our nature, they should not aim at accumulation or exhaustion only, but rather contribute to quality of life for all, in a dignifying and virtuous existence for humankind.



## HUMAN EMANCIPATION PATHS

Scientific knowledge must consider common sense, not to guarantee its universal validity, but rather to reach its emancipatory purpose.

Introducing the quality-of-life knowledge field and reflecting upon its epistemology and the method applied for its interpretation is the meaning given by these authors. The need to go beyond the barriers of interdisciplinarity and pre-conceived dimensions, with a look at the whole, leads us to think that quality of life is really historical, and is also the fruit of dialectics.

The method used in this work to interpret the phenomenon was DHM, which required another cognizant substrate, that is, the notion of drive. A systematic movement that is initial, but one that can continue without the pretention of being unique since there are spaces of discussion to be filled with field research.

Therefore, this book indicates that in addition to theorizing it is also necessary to continue verifying to shed more light on the theme. Something is always aroused by the movement, and this will be always ongoing work. In this sense, this initial movement should be a possible guide for such instrumentalization, even if in small steps throughout this knowledge field. The authors of this text seek to outline the pillar for a more complete and objective future display of the relevant phenomenon, so that it is presented logically founded, reproducible whenever required, and accepted as the closest possible to concrete reality.

Considering the individuals' quality of life as the greatest purpose of a fair and fraternal society, this work indicates the appropriation of the theme and its magnitude by education sciences. We propose that reflections upon the quality-of-life phenomenon start early in the classrooms in a transversal approach including the school curriculum subjects. It should continue reaching the spaces of everyday work and social life, so that first and foremost, this idea gains a priority position in individuals' collective consciousness.

It is urgent that the reflection proposed in this work shakes the current core that spins around material accumulation and in favor of a dominant or hegemonic class, thus promoting alienation and manipulation of individuals' lifestyles and favoring the development of capitalism. May the quality-of-life phenomenon be realized as an emancipation path, raising a strong counter-hegemonic flag.

These were the aspects focused on in its trajectory. By means of the method dialectics, the concepts and ideas already built were challenged. When noticed in society's dynamics, these conceptual elements are either emptied or historically resumed. But the lack of a convergence ring and standardization, in its central subjectivity, seems to hide, as a parallel, the capitalist domination. For being unconsciously consented and legitimated, the drive is seen as a self-perception of the phenomenon by the individuals. What comes next, probably, is the parametrized development after deeper studies that might be proposed under this view. This should not mean distancing from our humanity, conversely, it should get closer to reasoning, which is characteristic of human beings. This is a necessary objective since the life of the planet depends on it. The universality of human quality of life must become a priority due to the ephemerality of the Earth as our environment, subjected to exclusive demands of development and growth detached from human consciousness or essence.

This work is not about the sacrifice of humanities, but it will always occur while enlightened by exclusive subjectivism. As hostages of self-perception, the globalization that surrounds all human beings on the planet also boosts an objective and fast effect on the theme essence. This does not mean that we want or should extract the importance of multiculturalism for quality of life since it is a relevant element. However, it cannot be approached as merely intrinsic to the phenomenon, but rather due to its correlations with the objective world and the thought reality.

Such interference in this book was brought about by consciousness, by the applied reasoning, regarding a theme of the social phenomenon field. The sustainability debated in this work, for

example, reveals such change of view. As previously explained, it is no longer seen as a subjective lifestyle because it has become a necessary behavior basis, with defined pillars, an emergency for the continuity of existence, which, for being ephemeral, is logically material and necessary for all. It left the subjectivity field due to the materiality of life on this planet.

These authors consider that individuals' quality of life (those who work and consume, and are unconsciously dominated/alienated), in all dimensions, share first and foremost, a center with a market component which can only be made peripheral by means of the Science of Education, in the field of battle that opposes it.



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### Colophon

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In this book, readers will be able to appreciate an opportunity that can lead them to important reflections. By immersing themselves in this reading, they will be introduced to the theme of Quality of Life (QoL) through multidisciplinary analyses, research and other scientifically produced documents, being unified by a perspective that broadens and deepens it. In this text, the theme becomes engaging when connected to a dialectical, historical and material worldview. The authors' main objective was to redefine human life and its multiple forms of expression.

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