

Review Article

# Critical discourse analysis on the reduction of working time in galician newspapers: broadening perspectives from decolonial feminism

*Análisis del discurso crítico sobre la reducción de jornada en periódicos gallegos: ampliando miradas desde el feminismo decolonial*

*Análise do discurso crítico sobre a redução da jornada de trabalho nos jornais galegos: ampliando olhares desde o feminismo decolonial*

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## Abstract

**Introduction:** A care crisis is taking place, reinforced by various aspects, including neoliberal policies. The reduction in working hours is a right to promote conciliation. However, this phenomenon has not yet been explored from Social Occupational Therapy. **Objective:** To delve into the phenomenon of the reduction of working hours in women, through the analysis of the media from a decolonial feminist perspective and Social Occupational Therapy. **Method:** Critical Discourse Analysis was used from a decolonial feminist perspective, as a methodological approach to analyze the discourses, language and meanings told in the media. The Factiva database has been used to locate the news. The search was carried out on May 2, 2020 jointly by the authors. 50 newspaper news have been included. **Results:** This work makes visible situations of institutional violence, denial of women's rights, deprivation of liberty, injustices, and inequalities. Reflections from Social Occupational Therapy and decolonial feminism are interwoven. **Conclusions:** Social Occupational Therapy calls for a constant questioning of spaces (local and situated, in this case, Galicia) and practice actions, which implies questioning the oppressive structures of domination (State's articulation of the law of reduction of working hours and the social discourses constructed). The reduction in working hours is one more example of how our daily activities are mediated by patriarchal and colonial power relations.

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**Keywords:** Social Occupational Therapy, Social Justice, Gender, Employment, Human Rights.

### **Resumen**

**Introducción:** Se está produciendo una crisis de los cuidados reforzada por diversos aspectos, entre ellos, las políticas neoliberales. La reducción de jornada es un derecho para favorecer la conciliación. Sin embargo, este fenómeno todavía no ha sido explorado desde Terapia Ocupacional Social. **Objetivo:** Ahondar en el fenómeno de la reducción de jornada laboral en mujeres mediante el análisis de medios de comunicación desde una perspectiva feminista decolonial y de la Terapia Ocupacional Social. **Método:** Se utilizó el Análisis del Discurso Crítico desde una perspectiva feminista decolonial, como enfoque metodológico para analizar los discursos, el lenguaje y los significados transmitidos en los medios de comunicación. Se ha empleado la base de datos Factiva para localizar las noticias. La búsqueda fue realizada el 2 de mayo de 2020 de forma conjunta por las autoras. Se han incluido 50 noticias de periódico. **Resultados:** Este trabajo visibiliza situaciones de violencia institucional, negación de derechos de las mujeres, privación de libertad, injusticias y desigualdades. Se entretienen reflexiones desde la Terapia Ocupacional Social y el feminismo decolonial. **Conclusiones:** La Terapia Ocupacional Social llama por un constante cuestionamiento sobre los espacios (locales y situados, en este caso Galicia) y acciones de práctica, lo que implica cuestionar las estructuras opresivas de dominación (estructura del estado en la articulación de la ley de reducción de jornada y en los discursos sociales contruïdos). La reducción de jornada es un ejemplo más de cómo nuestros haceres cotidianos son mediados por relaciones de poder patriarcales y coloniales.

**Palabras clave:** Terapia Ocupacional Social, Justicia Social, Género, Empleo, Derechos Humanos.

### **Resumo**

**Introdução:** Está em curso uma crise assistencial, reforçada por vários aspectos, inclusive as políticas neoliberais. A redução da carga horária de trabalho é um direito a promover a conciliação. No entanto, esse fenômeno ainda não foi explorado a partir da Terapia Ocupacional Social. **Objetivo:** Aprofundar o fenômeno da redução da jornada de trabalho para mulheres, por meio da análise de notícias publicadas na mídia, a partir de uma perspectiva feminista decolonial e da Terapia Ocupacional Social. **Método:** A Análise Crítica do Discurso foi utilizada a partir de uma perspectiva feminista decolonial, como abordagem metodológica para analisar os discursos, a linguagem e os significados veiculados na mídia. O banco de dados Factiva foi usado para localizar as notícias. A busca foi realizada em 2 de maio de 2020 em conjunto pelas autoras. Cinquenta notícias de jornal foram incluídas. **Resultados:** Este trabalho torna visíveis situações de violência institucional, negação dos direitos das mulheres, privação de liberdade, injustiças e desigualdades. Entrecruzam-se reflexões da Terapia Ocupacional Social e do feminismo decolonial. **Conclusões:** A Terapia Ocupacional Social enfatiza um constante questionamento dos espaços (local e localizado, neste caso, Galícia) e das ações práticas, o que implica o questionamento das estruturas opressivas de dominação (estrutura do Estado na articulação da lei de redução da carga horária de trabalho e nos discursos sociais contruïdos). A redução da jornada de trabalho

é mais um exemplo de como nossas atividades cotidianas são mediadas por relações de poder patriarcais e coloniais.

**Palavras-chave:** Terapia Ocupacional Social, Justiça Social, Gênero, Emprego, Direitos Humanos.

## Introduction

The authors, both occupational therapists and feminists, problematize, from an occupational perspective, how the reduction in working hours can affect women's daily lives during the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. In this time of crisis, socio-labor inequalities were exacerbated and labor rights were undermined, such as the right to reconcile family, social and work life (Braz et al., 2022). Gender inequalities raised due to the increase in family care due to COVID-19, and with it, the needs for conciliation. In the time of social isolation, the media, understood as a means of human interaction (Varela, 2016), were a key way to maintain people's social network. In Spain, employment was one of the main concerns of the population, especially in relation to the emergency measures implemented by the state in the socio-labor sphere, as well as reductions in working hours purely for care. This scenario motivated the authors' joint reflection on how the discourses transmitted in the media can influence occupations and determine people's daily lives, which was previously explored in Occupational Therapy literature (Laliberte-Rudman & Dennhardt, 2014).

In this work, we consider it relevant to analyze the discourses to question how it is socio-culturally assumed that women must accept the reduction in working hours for care reasons and how this can provoke situations of social injustice (Farias & Leite-Junior, 2021). To the best of our knowledge, this topic has not been explored in the discipline. The authors decided to delve into this situation by weaving a perspective of Social Occupational Therapy and decolonial feminism. The combination of both theoretical angles allows us to investigate the various structural inequalities and multiple oppressions that women face on a daily basis, highlighting the role of social discourses and media as a vehicle to reproduce said oppressions (Lopes & Malfitano, 2021; Farias & Lopes, 2022). Next, 1.1.) we introduce the relevance of the theoretical positioning of Social Occupational Therapy and decolonial feminism, and 1.2.) the context of the reduction in working hours in Spain.

## Social Occupational Therapy and Decolonial Feminism: our theoretical perspectives

Social Occupational Therapy emerged in Brazil in the 70s-80s as a need to question the social structures that generate inequalities, multiple oppressions, social exclusion or cultural conflicts that prevent free participation in people's social life, whose emergence can be read in other writings (Barros et al., 2002; Jong et al., 2022; Lopes & Malfitano, 2021). Its practice is based on concepts of citizenship, rights, social inclusion, vulnerability, otherness, dehumanization and disaffiliation, as well as the fight for the democratization and transformation of exclusion spaces (Lopes & Malfitano, 2021; Farias & Lopes, 2022). This view of the discipline tries to question social differences

and recognizes the role of everyday actions for emancipation, considering its socio-political, economic and cultural dimensions of the context (Barros et al., 2011).

This field of discipline required the emergence of alternative forms of action and practice to address the vulnerable conditions of the population. Key principles include the critical problematization of socio-political contexts and the articulation between micro and macro-social aspects, understanding reality collectively, and the implementation of collective interventions in the territory and communities to strengthen social support networks (Barros et al., 2011; Lopes & Malfitano, 2021). In this attempt, Social Occupational Therapy is a field of knowledge and practices that presents a commitment and “political-ideological role for anti-oppression” (Farias & Lopes, 2022, p. 4), which implies questioning hegemonic orders of power (Lopes & Malfitano, 2021).

Social Occupational Therapy is focused on addressing social inequalities that jointly articulate various oppressions (Farias & Lopes, 2022) and decolonial feminism emerges as a necessary praxis to “enact a critique of racial, colonial and heterosexual capitalist gender oppression” and understanding the relations of domination based on “the intersection of complex systems of oppression” (Lugones, 2010, pp. 746-747). Considering that, both views are woven together as a valuable theoretical reference for this research. Decolonial feminism allows us not to disconnect feminism from colonialism, and understands colonialism as a producer of generative oppressions within a modern colonial episteme of the capitalist world (Curiel-Pichardo, 2014). This system of oppressions naturalizes the subordination of women and gender roles in their daily lives (Lugones, 2020). Thus, Lugones (2010) calls for understanding the interrelation between gender and colonial coloniality, and within this dynamic, to interrogate dynamics by which “the resistant person is oppressed by the colonial construction” (p. 747), derived from the superposition of the complex relationships between race, sex, sexuality, class and geopolitical elements (Lugones et al., 2022).

Although there are studies and experiences in Occupational Therapy that have begun to weave feminist decolonial reflections for an awareness of the profession to respond to “the complexity of social problems” and contribute to transformative practices (Silva et al., 2022, p. 2; Gomes, 2021), its theoretical-methodological construction still needs to be deepened. Social Occupational Therapy and decolonial feminism come together as they question the social order and the oppressive structures of domination crossed by gender, race and class (Lopes & Malfitano, 2021; Farias & Lopes, 2022). In this work, we recognize that these systems and structures of power are re-produced within the care space and they are the basis that articulates the principles of reduction in working hours; hence the need for a decolonial feminist perspective for its analysis. As explained in the following section, by legislative definition, the reduction in working hours falls into this scenario. Precisely, decolonial feminists have pointed out the centrality of cleaning and care work in the current configurations of racial capitalism and civilizational feminism. The struggles of these women are a priority task and must be at the heart of the global feminist agenda.

## **The reduction in working hours in Spain**

Feminist analyzes have made visible the care and labor crisis that women face, produced by various socio-economic, political and demographic factors, such as the entry of women into the labor market, characterized by job insecurity; or the underground economy, generating the double or triple shift phenomenon (Vidal-Sánchez et al., 2018). At the heart of this crisis is the rise of neoliberal policies, based on increased privatization and individualization (Carbonell-Esteller et al., 2014; Grandón, 2021). These policies are based on the patriarchy of consent (Puleo, 2000), which prevails under neoliberal logic, providing women with a false sense of equality and self-determination as political subjects, being well articulated under the scaffolding of factual powers (legislative, judicial power or the media and social networks).

Spain have family-oriented welfare systems (Esping-Andersen, 1993), that is, the family as the main support network for care and the welfare system. The economic context of recession (post-global socioeconomic crisis) has served as an excuse for the decrease in the involvement of the state in social policies, once again leaving women at the forefront of caregiving (Torns et al., 2012). Spain have low social spending, a precarious labor market, high rates of unemployment and social exclusion, and there is no adequate welfare policy, so women play a central role in preserving well-being (Carrasco et al., 2011). Thus, within the family, care is an issue historically anchored in women, which involves invisible and unpaid work. This model is extensive to Galicia, which has a tradition rooted in care in the family environment (Mayobre & Vázquez, 2015) and on which this work focuses.

Thus, the overload that women experience in their daily lives is aggravated by the lack of co-responsibility and the lack of public policies that provide effective support for care (Carrasco et al., 2011). This, together with the Spanish socio-economic situation, gave rise to even more precarious working conditions with few possibilities for conciliation. Flexible hours are one of the main measures requested by workers to reconcile family, personal and work life (Carrasco et al., 2011).

In Spain, this refers to the labor right to reduce working hours (España, 2015). The Ministry of Employment and Social Security (España, 2015) legally determines the reasons why workers have the right to request a reduction in working hours<sup>1</sup>. Paradoxically, after analysis, these are directly linked to care. Given the socio-historical relationship between women and care, it is not surprising that the data indicates that women continue to lead requests for reductions in working hours linked to care, 95% of all requests (Fernández-Kranz, 2018). These data are similar in Galicia, with, in this case, 88% of women requesting it (España, 2021). This right is subject to the collective agreement and business criteria, factors that are related to the characteristics of the work performed by women (mainly precarious) and that generate heterogeneity in access to labor rights (España, 2015). For example, if the company does not agree with the proposal to reduce working hours presented by the worker, the only way to reach an agreement is to file a lawsuit, which slows down the process (España,

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<sup>1</sup> The reasons included legislatively (España, 2015) to request a reduction in working hours are the following: birth or adoption, care of people under 12 years of age, people with disabilities who do not carry out paid activity, direct care of a family member, hospitalization, continuous and permanent care, or being considered a victim of gender violence or terrorism.

2015). Although the reduction in working hours is a structural problem linked to the social organization of care and legislative tools that protect it (Borrás et al., 2007); In practice, resolutions to reduce working hours are individualized and depend on the companies. Thus, the reduction of working hours is an insufficient measure, in its legislative articulation, for conciliation, which recognizes the patriarchy-capitalism link as a reproducer of structural oppressions (Farias & Lopes, 2022; Vargas, 2021) that limit the freedom of women in their daily lives, since they are forced to care. Given the tangibility of this patriarchal scenario, the authors decided to focus this work on exploring the discourses related to the reduction of working hours in women. Likewise, given that this care system is based on a canon of Westernized colonialism (Grosfoguel, 2011), incorporating decolonial feminism seems essential.

In parallel, Borrás et al. (2007, p. 84) problematize the value of the social discourses of companies and union parties regarding conciliation and reduction in working hours policies. Thus, they affirm that conciliation has become a social, work-related and individual problem (focus), with a social debate with “relative media impact”, fueled by the lack of training and preparation of institutions and unions to address the phenomenon. For example, the almost absence of women in union organizations leads to a masculinity of discourses on reducing working hours. Thus, we understand that the reduction in working hours is situated in sociocultural discourses and these discourses are in turn creators of realities. In this sense, the media are widely recognized not only as creators of ideologies, organizers of information and generators of social knowledge (Varela, 2016). The media represent a power (also known as the fourth power of the state) in the dynamics of society, since they are the place in which social reality is reflected and created (Castillo-Esparcia, 2011; Varela, 2016). The discourses they transmit influence the behavior of citizens (Mayne-Davis et al., 2020), the creation of policies and public opinion, being a fundamental instrument of capitalism (Castillo-Esparcia, 2011). In this sense, the media are also hegemonic power systems over the construction of gender (Varela, 2016) that legitimize patriarchal realities.

Given that 1) the COVID-19 context in which this work began limited access to the population and 2) the power of the media to generate discourses about women and the reduction of working hours; This work sought to explore the discourses and social constructions told in the media about the reduction of working hours in women. Although Occupational Therapy has begun to problematize the gender inequalities experienced by women due to hegemonic masculinity and structural factors (Braz et al., 2022; Cantero-Garlito, 2020; Ferreira-Marante et al., 2017; Galheigo, 2011; Grandón, 2021; Rivas-Quarneti et al., 2018), little is known about the phenomenon of reduced working hours from a decolonial feminist and social perspective of everyday life. Therefore, the main objective of this study is to delve into the phenomenon of the reduction in working hours in women, through the analysis of media from a decolonial feminist perspective and Social Occupational Therapy. The specific objectives for the study are: a) describe the image and discourse transmitted in the media about the reduction in working hours; b) problematize how the reduction in working hours has an impact on women's daily lives and their health; c) weave joint reflections from Social Occupational Therapy and decolonial feminism.

## **Methodology**

### **Critical discourse analysis**

Firstly, the authors reflected on their onto-epistemological position to develop this research. They began this work as women who combine their work, personal and social lives with research within the field of Occupational Therapy, being a largely unrecognized and unpaid task. This allows us to approach the study phenomenon from an experienced and critical contextual position with the system that articulates it. On the other hand, their closeness to the feminist movement, from activism, does not place them in a passive position either, having a perspective anchored in this personal and professional background.

Critical Discourse Analysis (hereinafter CDA) was used as a methodological approach to analyze the discourses, language and meanings transmitted in the media (blogs, newspaper news and multimedia media) (Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000; Laliberte-Rudman & Dennhardt, 2014). This methodology is a useful tool to expand the debate on socio-political issues, since it provides a method to analyze how the discourses collected in these media are reproduced (Ziskin, 2019). These contribute to building the social ideology of what it means to be a woman and have reduced hours.

The CDA methodology has been used in other research within the area on topics such as the analysis of laws related to immigration and their impact on the recipients (Huot et al., 2016), migration processes in the child population (Opland-Stenersen et al., 2016), the occupational transition towards retirement (Laliberte-Rudman, 2005; Laliberte-Rudman et al., 2009) or the representation of maternal occupations of mothers of girls and boys with food allergies (VanderKaay, 2016).

This work has focused on CDA from a decolonial feminist perspective, based on how Azpiazu-Carballo (2014, p. 114) describes, CDA in its origin is not a method that is based on a feminist analysis, but rather the movement itself has “re-appropriated and re-constructed”. Therefore, this reorientation gives rise to focusing and locating CDA in an analysis with a gender perspective, since it allows it to be situated in the middle of power relations (Fairclough, 2010), among them those related to gender and in the case of this research, those that the de facto powers operate on women.

It is important to add that the authors have presented a communication to a conference in which they articulated and reflected on the potential of CDA to examine the phenomenon of reduced working hours in newspaper news (Ferreira-Marante & Veiga-Seijo, 2021). Although this communication allowed the authors to delve into the methodological approach and a preliminary analysis, the present work delves deeper and presents a final analysis of the newspaper news and its discussion from a Social Occupational Therapy perspective and decolonial feminism.

### **Database and search criteria**

The Factiva electronic database has been used, which compiles information from various sources such as newspapers, websites, blogs and multimedia. This database was selected since the interest of the research was to know the view that is transmitted in the media about the reduction in working hours and women. Furthermore, these types of

resources are a massive information channel that reaches the majority of the population with Internet access. The Factiva database facilitated the search for these materials.

The search was carried out on May 2, 2020 jointly by the authors. The theme had to focus on reduction in working hours and being a woman. It is important to note that because the search was carried out at the initial time of the COVID-19 pandemic, articles related to the virus were not included, since its magnitude and health, political, social and economic implications of the pandemic were unknown. Due to the uncertainty experienced at these times, the authors decided to focus the phenomenon on news prior to the pandemic.

The news selection criteria were: a) year of publication: no time limits were established because we were interested in having a broad understanding of the subject of study; b) all types of information sources available in Factiva were included; c) the articles were filtered by Spanish, English and Portuguese language (it should be noted that, although one of the languages in the study territory is Galician, the database did not offer this option).

The key words to carry out the search were: “reduction in working hours”, “woman”, and “work”, which were combined with the Boolean operators “OR” and “AND”. The search equation established in Factiva was ("reduction in working hours") AND ("woman" OR "gender" OR "feminism") AND ("work" or "employment").

## **Articles selection process and analysis**

### *First level of analysis*

After the search, the number of results was 184. After eliminating duplicates (n = 86), the number of documents to review was 98. The authors jointly read the 98 newspaper news and coded the information. In this first phase of analysis, 37 articles were excluded, with the reasons given below: a) 6 articles focused on explaining the possibility of reducing working hours in the context of the coronavirus (COVID-19), this is because the bibliographic search was carried out during the COVID-19 pandemic; b) 2 articles focused their theme on improving birth rates through the granting of social aid or related to care; c) 1 article focuses on the phenomenon of reduced working hours in Germany; d) 24 articles did not address the phenomenon of reduced working hours in a clear, specific and in-depth manner (some of these articles provide data from the INE); e) 4 articles focus on the demand for 8M and feminism. After this exclusion process, a total of 61 were included for analysis.

To facilitate the analysis process, the authors created an online Excel sheet, in which they analyzed the following variables: news headlines, year, authorship, source (newspaper), place of publication of the news, language and reason for the inclusion of the news.

This made it easier to start the analysis process and organize the news by similarity of content. To do this, the authors established color categories to organize the news according to their content. The use of colors made it possible to easily identify which

news items have common topics and generate a visual map that has allowed progress in the analysis.

### *Second level of analysis*

The authors decided to carry out a second analysis of the news in order to refine the understanding of the themes created. To do this, the authors divided the number of preselected news items (61) to carry out a first complete reading and separate analysis. In a Word document, they wrote the headline, a summary of the news and some first reflections on the news, as well as if doubts arose about whether the news was relevant to the research. After this, they held a meeting in which they shared the individual analysis and problematized the preliminary themes and the final inclusion of the news. In this joint reflection process, the authors decided to reject 11 news because they did not address the research topic (reduction of working hours), but only mentioned it. Finally, this work includes the analysis of 50 newspaper news. In the Supplementary Material, you can consult a table with an analysis of the news included and the numbers associated with the references of the news named in the Results section. A second level of analysis and organization of the news allowed the authors to understand the reduction of women's working hours in these topics: a) dismissals, discrimination and harassment, b) institutional violence, c) gender stereotypes in the political space, d) steps towards change and e) men who request a reduction in working hours.

Table 1 summarizes the methodological process carried out to select the news:

**Table 1.** Summary of the news selection process.

<b>Search</b>	<b>184 news found on Factiva</b>	
Elimination of duplicates	98 selected news	Eliminated news: 86
First level of analysis	Joint reading of the authors and coding of the information Shortlisted news: 61	Excluded news: 37
Second level of analysis	Complete reading and analysis of the news by the authors separately Sharing meeting	Rejected news: 11
Total	50 selected newspaper news	

### **Ethical principles**

The information collected in this research comes from online newspaper news, accessible for consultation. All the news is signed by individual authorship or with that of the newspaper itself. To give greater transparency to this research, a table has been prepared in which the news is described and detailed (it can be consulted in the Supplementary Material section).

In the same way, we have reflected on the research ethical principles with online data. Cilliers & Viljoen (2021) argue that this type of research, in which direct interaction with the person who publishes is not required, it is not considered private information and should not have that category for the purposes of ethical evaluation.

Taking into account the lack of consensus that exists on this type of online research and that it is an open and ongoing debate, the authors have followed the Internet-Specific Ethical Questions Framework, ethical recommendations for research carried out on the Internet (Markham & Buchanan, 2012). The authors decided to follow this document since it provides questions for reflection and ethical decision-making when data collection is based on public information on the Internet. For example, the authors had extensive debates on potential ethical dilemmas such as anonymization or not of real cases presented by the news, which they have problematized through continuous reflection for joint decision-making. This same guide has been taken as a reference in other research (VanderKaay, 2016) with online data and similar methodological characteristics.

### **Rigor criterion**

The authors have followed the rigor criteria documented by Greckhamer & Cilesiz (2014), mainly highlighting transparency in the analysis process and onto-epistemological coherence with the discourses analysis. To follow the principle of transparency in the analysis process and comply with trustworthiness or reliability criteria, the authors have documented the analysis process in detail in section 2.3. Likewise, the authors have thought deeply about their onto-epistemological position and how this has nourished the methodology and analysis. In this case, the study has been guided by a feminist perspective as described in section 2.1. Thus, the authors have tried to analyze the discourses systematically following the underlying epistemological and theoretical principles, that is, adhering to the decolonial feminist perspective, which provides rigor to the study (Greckhamer & Cilesiz, 2014).

### **Results and Discussion**

In this section, the authors intertwine the analysis of results based on the initial topics with the discussion positioned from decolonial feminism and Social Occupational Therapy in relation to the research goals. Firstly, the news is discussed in relation to the imaginaries and discourses created in the media and its impact on women's daily lives and health; and secondly, reflections from Social Occupational Therapy and decolonial feminism are interwoven.

#### **Imaginary of the reduction of working hours in the media and its impact on daily life**

This study glimpses how the discourses told in the news affects the imagination and “world views” that the citizens have about who and how we request a reduction in working hours (Fairclough, 2010). The results show that the reduction in working hours is linked to a matter of care, mainly care of daughters and sons but also of family members who have a dependency situation. Those who request the reduction of working hours and who are expected to manage it are women. These discourses glimpse the hetero-patriarchal imaginary “assuming unpaid work as a naturally feminine attribute, this should not be considered as work, but as a mandate or a feminine duty-

being crossed by moral responsibility for others” (Grandón, 2021, p. 5). Telling this type of discourse perpetuates the traditional Westernized structure of care, excluding other forms of family and public organization. Thus, it also reproduces the job expectations that women can access and the imposition of reduced working hours on their lives (Jiménez-Moreno et al., 2020).

From a macro level, a group of news illustrate how public policies and union organizations themselves reproduce discourses about the relationship between being a woman and requesting a reduction in working hours for care. Thus, they assume that women must be in charge of care since in-person work “makes it difficult for women to assume responsibilities, especially since they generally organize their time based on the interests of other people” (10), understanding other people as family. The media reinforce that being a woman implies being responsible for care and therefore they must request reductions in working hours. “Women are the ones who most request this measure to raise their children” (25) or union organizations “if you have to request a leave of absence” or a reduction in working hours for that reason [taking a child to the doctor or hospitalization of a family member] is the woman who requests it” (30). The speeches told in the news show that the structure of care and those who provide it are not questioned, “the workers surveyed say they have no problems combining work with caring for children. Because they don't see it as abnormal for grandparents to take care of them” (25).

Thus, the main reason why women request a reduction in working hours is to care for children, due to high-risk pregnancies or after maternity leave (14, 15, 23, 26, 27, 35, 39, 41, and 42). It should be noted that the women in the cases addressed work in socially masculinized sectors (automotive industries, telecommunications companies, research and at sea) (27, 26, 39). Especially in these masculinized sectors, women can be fired for claiming their rights, “the only female driver in a men's company and her motherhood ended in dismissal” (5).

Some women experience cases of sexist violence (marginalization, sexist discrimination, pressure, threats, bullying, workplace harassment and isolation) after being readmitted to their jobs following legal proceedings (5, 6, 11, 27, 41). For example, some women are pressured to make a change in the performance of usual tasks: from being a driver to washing buses (27). They “reconverted” Mercedes into a seller of computer products for cars. A few months later, she was changed – only to myself, she highlights - the usual working days from Monday to Friday: it was extended until Saturday, “justifying that it was necessary to serve the public.” In addition, her access to the Internet and the workshop was suppressed: “I couldn't give clients the pieces they were going to look for or my email” (14). Thus, she points out “the most rancid chauvinism, in a company dedicated to new technologies, of a businessman who does not conceive that motherhood and employment can be made compatible” (14).

In addition to verbal and emotional violence and harassment, in Névida's case, she experienced physical violence when she needed to miss two days to care for her father. Her manager's response was “a kick to the lower back that sent her down the stairs” which caused “a crack in her rib, several bruises and blood in her urine” due to the fall (11). Reducing working hours also entails risks of economic violence since, as noted, it implies “a reduction in salary by having reduced working hours, which is also a sacrifice for the plaintiff” (35).

The set of these situations exposes how women are the first to “suffer the crisis” in the labor market (3), situations of violence, with great impact on their occupations, health and well-being. This is explained by Milagros, who states that the lack of family conciliation and work overload led to being “on leave due to depression because I cannot make my motherhood compatible with caring for the child” (26). In another case, it is observed how women from a company are fired indiscriminately when they reject the reduction of working hours, since this worsens their working conditions at an economic level (3).

Women deal with situations of sexist violence, being forced to change the economic conditions and functions of their jobs, discriminated against and isolated in the work environment for the mere fact of requesting a reduction in working hours (5, 6, 11, 27, and 41). Furthermore, they face the limitations of the law itself, which gives rise to discrimination by public institutions. All of this means that women may experience greater impoverishment and job insecurity (Grandón, 2021).

Thus, this complex scenario of oppression, lack of freedom in decision-making and violence exposes how discourses allow the expression and legitimization of power relations, dominance, vulnerability, discrimination and inequality that women face when requesting a reduction in working hours (Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000; Limerick, 2021). Therefore, depending on the individual positioned within said discourses (Fairclough, 2010; Laliberte-Rudman & Dennhardt, 2014; Jiménez-Moreno et al., 2020), in this case women, these can generate inclusion or exclusion.

In some news, situations of institutional violence observed due to the absence or denial of measures to reduce working hours from public institutions. Although “the new order includes [...] a reduction in working hours to care for a minor child who suffers from cancer” (45), which is again associated with reproductive work; It is, in turn, a generator of “ostracism” by not recognizing the case of childhoods with rare diseases. This is illustrated by Julia's family who report “the forgetfulness” of laws and justice by not accompanying the needs that their daughter presents, being excluded from the rights that they promulgate “they need the time to take care of their daughter, not to be in bureaucratic problems with all administrations” (46). At the same time, a mother had to deal with the right to breast-feeding with justice in the face of a work schedule that prevented her from breastfeeding, leaving her in a clear situation of vulnerability by denying her flexible hours and having to subsequently claim the right to reduced working hours. “With a favorable report from her doctor, the security guard asked the Mutua [...] to issue her a medical certificate stating that her job represented a risk to breastfeeding. The request was denied [...] which led her to present a claim to the Social Court, which rejected her arguments” (47). When women are forced to face schedules that do not fit into their lives, they see that reducing hours is not an effective solution “I could ask for a reduction in hours [...] «What difference does it make coming in an hour later in the morning or leaving earlier? Well, it doesn't solve anything (44); and they believe that laws must be established and that they should adjust to real demands “it is good in theory, but it is not practical, it does not help and it does not go hand in hand with the sectors” (44).

Although the study focused on the experience of women who request a reduction in working hours, it was decided to accept and expand the results by including two news stories that talk about men. This methodological decision is based on analyzing the

experiences of men who have felt discriminated against for requesting a reduction in working hours. They feel judged when trying to change or broaden the social outlook “a man is not expected to avail himself of this right, when I requested it I felt quite discriminated against” (40). In one case, the precarious working conditions offered to him were reported and he was fired: “I am a worker for the Xunta de Galicia, a driver for senior officials (...) I requested a reduction in working hours and they imposed conditions with which I did not agree.” (9). These cases are isolated and once again show how companies and institutions do not facilitate conciliation and even more so when it is not what is expected from the hetero-patriarchal prism. This is part of the socially imposed sexual division of labor where men have historically dominated the productive space (Mayobre & Vázquez, 2015), giving rise to resistance when trying to move towards other forms of social organization of care. Jiménez-Moreno et al. (2020) present the case of women who challenge the double presence in work and family life from a perspective of occupational justice, showing the tensions that occupations generate when they are assigned to men or women in the context of a hegemonic society.

Although all the news included show situations of vulnerability and negative feelings regarding the reduction of working hours, some news show specific cases of women that seem hopeful (22,36,43). Four news show the case of women who have requested a reduction in working hours and whose companies have been “flexible” to the needs of the employees. The women explain that “they never gave me any problems” (22) and that “I have always been able to reconcile” (36). The profile is worth highlighting: president of a football club, a woman who works in the army and a worker in the construction sector (43). Specifically, in one of the cases, a single-parent family benefits from the Red Cross conciliation program, where “they are almost always women.” Therefore, although this group of news shows specific cases of positive experiences regarding the reduction in working hours, the discourse shown in the news links care again with the feminine. Analyzing the discourse of these news leads to (re)thinking how “positive” these experiences are from a decolonial feminist perspective or whether their socio-labor situation has not been critically questioned.

### **Weaving reflections from Social Occupational Therapy and decolonial feminism: Opening dialogic encounters**

The study of reduced working hours is another example of how our daily activities are mediated by patriarchal power relations (Alonso-Ferreira et al., 2022; Braz et al., 2022; Grandón, 2019; Melo, 2016), feminized (Braz et al., 2022; Grandón, 2019; Melo, 2016) and colonial (Lugones, 2020). In Social Occupational Therapy, Melo et al. (2020), propose understanding gender as a social marker of the difference that builds people's ways of living (Melo et al., 2020). This calls for reflection on how the hetero-patriarchal and hegemonic system (Braz et al., 2022; Grandón, 2021) perpetuates injustices in the lives of women and the need for a feminist approach in the profession (Balanta-Cobo et al., 2022). We propose to deepen this analysis from a perspective of decolonial feminism, in epistemological, theoretical and political terms, not only to give answers, but to expand paths for (other) questions, dialogues and reflections.

Firstly, analyzing from Social Occupational Therapy how social markers (such as gender) cross people's identities would allow progress towards the ethical-political

commitment of the profession to problematize oppressive legal systems anchored in hegemonic logics, which regulate rights and dignified life for the population (Bardi et al., 2020; Braz et al., 2022; Lopes & Malfitano, 2021). This questioning is intertwined with decolonial feminism insofar as it decolonizes universalism (Khader, 2019). Applied to the case of the law that protects the right to reduced working hours in Spain, we question who develops and decides the reasons for requesting said reduction, as well as what are the colonial capitalist theoretical assumptions that support the enunciation of said reasons. This is problematized, for example, in the case of news 44, which glimpses the limitations and contradictions of the law with the real lives of women, making them invisible, reproducing institutional violence, oppression, exclusions, with power imbalances and inequality that they legitimize and organize women's lives.

Thus, following Serene Khader, the reduction of working hours not only requires a feminist analysis, but an anti-imperialist feminist analysis (Khader, 2019) that, on the one hand, dismantles the universalization of laws and carries out a contextualized analysis of the reality of the women, and on the other, that they are thought of from the intersectionality of gender, class, race and sexuality (Martín Alcoff, 2020; Lugones, 2005). Thus, this anti-imperialist analysis is dialogic, interactive and local (Martín Alcoff, 2020). The discourses analyzed in this work show how the law reducing working hours is limited and generates violence since it does not respond to the multiplicity of realities of the population; and it is not interactive, but is centralized, colonial and Universalist. Social Occupational Therapy understood as “diverse and multiple”, resonates with the need for this plurality of perspectives in the construction of actions and dialogue with multiple rationalities (Lopes & Malfitano, 2021).

At the same time, we analyze that the speeches and the law of reduction of working hours are anchored in the idealization of individualist Western gender assumptions that hope to emancipate women by providing options so that they can continue working and earning money (economic independence) and at the same time they can care (reproductive work). However, we find the absence of an analysis of how these political strategies in turn perpetuate sexist oppressions and harm women (subtracting freedom and agency) beyond benefiting them (Khader, 2019). For example, consider cases like that of Milagros, fired due to depression based on the dilemma of working or caring for her son. This raises the question of what choices and non-choices we make, which are actually chosen or imposed by people in their daily lives (Morrison & Polanco-Cerón, 2019).

Khader (2019) questions why we have the conception that men and women must develop different gender roles. None of the news included in this work analyzes why it is women who should assume and be responsible for care and request conciliation. If we understand gender as the imposition of the coloniality of modern power (Lugones, 2008, p. 93), what would happen if we dismantled gender? What would the reasons for requesting a reduction in working hours be reduced to? How would you change the discourses that currently assume that women must request a reduction in working hours?

The news speeches and the reasons that support the reduction of working hours are linked to the Westernized normative logic of care. Considering this, the reduction of working hours would be understood as an individualized response to the normative model of care in which women make choices and non-choices, free and not free. Is a collective

response required? Understanding the actions of Social Occupational Therapy in the analysis of the inequalities embedded in the reduction of working hours requires challenging our epistemologies. Melo et al. (2020, p. 1070) calls for the need to reflect on episteme that allow “problematizing hegemonic knowledge and practices, questioning places of enunciation, considering the markers that are socially constructed around differences and allowing the fluidity of the possibilities of transformation”. Regarding the reduction of working hours, it is essential to (re)think what type of understanding we have about care. This is what Malfitano & Sakellariou (2019) problematize, who call for considering the collective and political dimension of care in our practices.

In the introduction, we articulate that Social Occupational Therapy embodies a view of reality as collective and its emergence required collective community actions that strengthened social support networks in people in vulnerable situations (Barros et al., 2002, 2011; Lopes & Malfitano, 2021). Inspired by proposals such as Gomes et al. (2023), we imagine the need for this collective approach from Social Occupational Therapy to not only accompany women who request a reduction in working hours, but also the use and generation of technologies and participatory and community methodological proposals, which can be extended to areas from various areas of action, such as childhood. These ways of doing can help denaturalize the reasons associated with reducing working hours and explore collective proposals to challenge the subaltern, strengthen the emancipation, freedom and transformation of women's daily lives (Barros et al., 2002; Lopes & Malfitano, 2021; Farias & Lopes, 2022). How? With them, together.

Social Occupational Therapy calls for constant questioning of the practice spaces and actions of occupational therapists (Lopes & Malfitano, 2021), which implies interrogating the profession and the oppressive structures of domination (Farias & Lopes, 2022). Along these lines, Morrison & Araya (2018) point out how the political role of the discipline and how a feminist Occupational Therapy can contribute to questioning and reflecting on our ways of being, doing, thinking and knowing Occupational Therapy, deconstructing naturalized theoretical models. Social Occupational Therapy can help create justice in an unfair world, analyzing and co-creating “effective and meaningful political strategies” (Khader, 2019). Questioning and being part of the places in which discourses are constructed, challenging the oppressive structures that support violence in contexts of reduced working hours (Farias & Lopes, 2022), can be part of the educational, research and practical agenda of the discipline. Thus, problematizing the reduction of working hours gives the opportunity to reflect again on the “(dis)connections” still present in the profession on the gap between theory and practice, shedding light on the need to continue reflecting as professionals and citizens in our practice. (Jong et al., 2022).

As we articulated previously, feminist decolonial perspectives require local contextualization. Galicia, the territory of the study, can be seen as an internal colony within a superstructure that is the Spanish state (Beiras, 2009), which places it in a compromised position in relation to the legislative sphere. This limits its decision-making and operational capacity, being reduced to the central decisions of the state. If the prevailing logic seems to compromise the rights of citizens, especially women, it is necessary to rethink new organizational forms. The results indicate that care falls on women, with measures such as reducing working hours being merely palliative and

insufficient for a problem that is structural. The media operate as speech transmitters, leaving little room for questioning what they reproduce. All this gives rise to a situation of scaffolded oppression in the organization of the state. An organizational alternative may be the development of the “good living” paradigm, a concept that questions the colonial form of organization (Ecuador, 2009) and invites the articulation of new worldviews far from neoliberal logic, applied to each territory and taking into account their diversities. Guajardo-Córdoba (2020, p. 15) invites us to include this view from Occupational Therapy, being a way of applying it in everyday life and generating changes “that lead subjects to consider and produce, from their situated, embodied historical positions, the possibility of formulating and build worlds that collect their different horizons and contexts from reciprocity”.

### **Limitations of the Research**

The methodological design of the research was carried out in times of the COVID-19 pandemic, so this has represented an organizational and operational limitation of the research. In the search equation, terms could have been included that expanded the search field, which could be a line to be developed in future research. Although the word “men” was not explicitly included, news has been included that talks about their experience with the reduction of working hours in the results. Although this was not part of the general objective of the research initially, it does respond to drawing the imagery transmitted in the media (specific objective a). One of the languages in the study territory is Galician, a language that was not available in the search database, so it is possible that this could represent a bias.

As future lines of inquiry, we propose the organization of a research based on the participatory action research methodology with people who have requested a reduction in working hours.

### **Conclusion**

This work presents how the media and specifically newspaper news make visible the reduction of working hours as a phenomenon linked to care and women. This reductionist view limits the understanding of the reduction of working hours as a right of citizens, generating situations of injustice and inequality. Thus, the realities of women presented in the news explain how requests for reduced hours entail sexist and discriminatory experiences that have an impact on their daily lives. With this, it is exposed how public care policies and the reduction of working hours do not support women’s daily lives, therefore they are positioned as an element that perpetuates inequalities and situations of vulnerability.

The reduction of working hours law is linked to individualistic gender assumptions, limiting its impact on women's real lives. Thus, this work, by glimpsing situations of institutional violence, denial of women's rights, deprivation of freedom, injustices and inequalities intertwined in social discourses, represents an important contribution to continue reflecting from Social Occupational Therapy on the role of gender in the constructions of everyday life.

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### Author's Contributions

Rocio Ferreira-Marante presented the original idea, conceptualized the research design, review of newspaper news, analysis, writing and review of the manuscript. Silvia Veiga-Seijo conceptualized the research design, review of newspaper news, analysis, writing and review of the manuscript. All authors approved the final version of the text.

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## **Supplementary Material**

Supplementary material accompanies this paper.

Table S1

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