Original Article

Projecting life as a young girl: contributions of occupational social therapy

Projetar a vida sendo menina: contribuições da terapia ocupacional social

Maribia Taliane de Oliveira[a] (ID), Lívia Celegati Pan[a] (ID)

[a]Universidade Federal de São Carlos – UFSCar, São Carlos, SP, Brasil.

Abstract

The condition of women in our society has important implications in terms of hierarchy, asymmetry, discrimination, and inequality, limiting possibilities in the projection of life. Considering that being a young girl has implications that materialize in the experience of youth and in the dreams and projects that can be built at this stage, this research sought to understand dimensions of the lives of girls/women that are high school students that influence the projection of their lives, as well as the possible contributions of social occupational therapy in tackling this problem. For these objectives to be met, a participatory methodology was used, in the research-intervention modality, carried out in a public school, through the construction of a "Girls Club", where Activities, Dynamics and Project Workshops were held. The results showed that social gender conventions permeate the relationship established between girls/women, their bodies and their daily lives; exposure to situations of violence since childhood and, when young, more evident in affective and/or sexual relationships; weaknesses and ruptures in family and friendship ties; consistent and protective support social networks, in particular, the non-recognition of the school as a component of this network; elements that permeate the construction of their life projects. It is discussed that social occupational therapy, through its social technologies, can contribute to confronting everyday problems resulting from the social construction related to being a girl/woman in expanding experiences with a view to autonomy and emancipation, as well as strengthening of support social networks and in confronting situations of violence.

Keywords: Projects, Schools, Youth, Occupational Therapy, Gender Equity.

Resumo

A condição da mulher em nossa sociedade tem importantes implicações em termos de hierarquia, assimetria, discriminação e desigualdade, cerceando possibilidades

na projeção da vida. Considerando que ser uma jovem menina traz implicações que se materializam na vivência da juventude e nos sonhos e projetos que podem se construir nessa fase, esta pesquisa buscou conhecer dimensões da vida de meninas/mulheres estudantes do Ensino Médio que influenciam a projeção de suas vidas, bem como as possíveis contribuições da terapia ocupacional social no enfrentamento desta problemática. Para que tais objetivos fossem cumpridos, utilizou-se de uma metodologia participativa, na modalidade pesquisa-intervenção, realizada em uma escola pública, por meio da construção de um "Clube das Meninas", onde foram realizadas Oficinas de Atividades, Dinâmicas e Projetos. Os resultados apontaram que as convenções sociais de gênero permeiam a relação estabelecida entre as meninas/mulheres, os seus corpos e seus cotidianos; exposição a situações de violência desde a infância e, quando jovens, de maneira mais evidente nos relacionamentos afetivos e/ou sexuais; fragilidades e rupturas de vínculos familiares e de amizade; de redes sociais de suporte consistentes e protetivas, em especial, o não reconhecimento da escola como componente dessa rede; elementos que atravessam a construção de seus projetos de vida. Discute-se que a terapia ocupacional social, por meio de suas tecnologias sociais, pode contribuir com o enfrentamento das problemáticas cotidianas resultantes da construção social relacionada ao ser menina/mulher na ampliação de vivências com vistas à autonomia e à emancipação, assim como no fortalecimento das redes sociais de suporte e no enfrentamento de situações de violência.

Palavras-chave: Projetos, Escolas, Juventudes, Terapia Ocupacional, Equidade de Gênero.

Introduction

This research started from the understanding that young people are, at all times, crossed by social markers of difference that mobilize different forms of oppression, which work together in the production of injustices, in practices of stigmatization, inferiorization, victimization by violence and crime, exclusion and/or discrimination in arenas such as employment, education, housing, health, leisure, among others. As a result, young people demand actions aimed at "[…] access to the educational system, employment opportunities and productive actions and combating different forms of physical and symbolic violence" (Brasil, 2013, p. 13).

Social markers of differences are a way of designating how these are socially instituted and may contain implications in terms of hierarchy, asymmetry, discrimination, and inequality (Almeida et al., 2018). However, Brah (2006) highlights that difference, in itself, is not always a marker of hierarchy and oppression. Thus, it is necessary to understand whether difference results in inequality, exploitation, and oppression or in egalitarianism, diversity and democratic forms of political agency. Differences are inscribed in the categories of gender, sexuality, race/color, class, ethnicity, generation, religion, among others and, when they result in inequality, different dimensions of social life can be marked by forms of oppression. In this way, implicitly or explicitly, "[…] real lives are forged from complex articulations of these dimensions" (Brah, 2006, p. 341).

Considering that several studies point to the significant violations of rights and exposure to risks and violence to which women and girls are subjected, a situation worsened by the context of the Covid-19 pandemic from 2020 onwards (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística, 2019, 2021; Plan International, 2021; Rede Brasileira de Pesquisa em Soberania e Segurança Alimentar, 2022; World Economic Forum, 2021), gender was taken here as the first marker.

Women, at different periods of their lives, suffer gender-based violence in its various expressions: restrictions in the field of sexual autonomy, difficulties in accessing sexual and reproductive health, overload of responsibilities, occupational segregation, salary discrimination, low presence in spaces of power, poor distribution of household chores, among others – data discussed in more detail in the references mentioned above (Carrara et al., 2010).

Thus, these aggravating factors permeate the lives of women and girls, directly impacting their living conditions and influencing the construction of their life projects. This fact, when linked to the youth debate, sheds light on the public school and its central place as a space for learning formal content, considered knowledge produced and accumulated by humanity and to which everyone has the right to access and seizure. Furthermore, it is at school where one can learn to live with diversity, establish ties and social relationships, share experiences and realities, elements that make up, as pointed out by Cury (2002), bases for the exercise of citizenship and, in a certain way, to build their own life.

Along with this, social occupational therapy, in its proposal for working with young people, has problematized the centrality of the public school as a space to be strengthened as a social support network for this public, as well as accumulated experiences that support the relevance of taking it as a locus for the development of therapeutic-occupational actions aimed at processes of personal and social participation and emancipation (Pan & Lopes, 2022).

As a field of knowledge and practice, social occupational therapy presents social technologies capable of fostering these processes, integrating, and articulating actions of macro and microsocial scope, linked to the social issue posed for the individual and collective lives of different subjects (Lopes et al., 2014).

Thus, based on the theoretical-methodological frameworks of social occupational therapy, as well as the problems of the correlation between gender and youth, the development of this research was outlined, which aimed to understand dimensions of the lives of girls/women high school students in a Public School that influence the projection of their lives, namely: gender, daily life, relationships, support social networks and life projects, as well as understanding how the work of social occupational therapy with young girls, aimed at producing emancipation, contributes to the construction of these projects with autonomy.

Methodological Path

This is a qualitative study, with focuses defined by participatory research, in the intervention research modality. This practice is based on the understanding that data about the reality portrayed are not "collected", but produced through the lens of the method. In this sense, it is understood that the researcher is also in a social relationship,

and there is no neutrality based on their presence in the conditions of application and operationalization of the method (Ferreira, 2017).

Participatory research starts from the concrete reality of the daily lives of the individual and collective participants in the process, in its different dimensions and interactions. Furthermore, this must be developed as a clear and assumed act of commitment, presence, and participation, guaranteeing the autonomy of its subjects in the management of knowledge and the social actions derived from it (Brandão & Borges, 2007).

Data production had as its central strategy the use of Activity, Dynamics and Project Workshops, a social occupational therapy methodology (Lopes et al., 2014), integrated into the field diary and informal conversations.

According to Lopes et al. (2011, 2014), the Activities, Dynamics and Projects Workshops are a collective intervention methodology that allows the approach, monitoring, understanding of demands and strengthening of individual and collective subjects. Through them, based on the use of activities as mediators of relationships and triggers for the intervention process, it is possible to produce spaces for experimentation, learning, exchanges, debates, processes of reflection and awareness, conceiving each participant as being active in the construction process of subjectivity.

The workshops were carried out through a Youth Club[1], entitled "Clube das Meninas" (Girl's Club) for high school students from a public school that is part of the Integral Education Program (PEI), in the state of São Paulo, who identified themselves as a girl/woman, who agreed to participate in the research voluntarily and, consequently, of the Club.

11 workshops were held at Clube das Meninas, in the first half of 2022, with the following themes, based on scientific literature on gender and youth: What is it like to be a girl/woman?; everyday life and invisible work; affective and/or sexual relationships; life projects; social support networks and impacts of the pandemic, with weekly meetings lasting 1h30, with the participation of eight girls. All workshops held were audio recorded, and later transcribed and analyzed.

It is noteworthy that all participants presented the Free and Informed Consent Form and the Free and Informed Assent Form signed and that the research was approved by the Ethics and Research Committee (CEP) of UFSCar based on the opinion No. 5.188.885.

Data analysis was carried out by categorizing the themes that gained evidence during its production, through review and systematization of the literature, about the reality on which this study focuses. Thus, it focused on gender issues and studies in the field of sociology on life projects and youth, the implications of social markers of difference in this area and the contributions of occupational therapy in general and social occupational therapy in particular.

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[1] Youth Clubs are "thematic groups created and organized by students, with the support of teachers and school management", forming part of the methodologies of the Pedagogical Model of the Integral Education Program (PEI) in the state of São Paulo (São Paulo, 2021a).

Results and Discussion

Initial challenges

Clube das Meninas began with participants who were from different classes and years of high school. They were between 15 and 18 years old, many only knew each other by sight and there was no relationship of friendship or closeness between most of them, an aspect that initially made it difficult for the participants to bond and be available for exchanges and dialogue.

In the first three meetings, it was common for some girls to look for the person responsible for the Workshops to express their discomfort with the presence of other participants and their fear of sharing intimate and personal issues. In fact, other potential members expressed their desire to participate in the Club and came to seek more information over the first few weeks, but refused to be with other girls they "didn't like".

It was necessary, after identifying possible conflicts and enmities, to mediate more closely with some participants and build, within the Club, agreements that involved: absolute secrecy regarding all information and stories shared, collective responsibility for the care for each participant and report heard, in addition to the need for shared construction of a safe and respectful space for everyone.

With a lot of dialogue, mediation and using the contents and reports that emerged during the Workshops to raise awareness, it was possible to ensure that the participants remained in the Club, even if they did not initially establish relationships of friendship and/or closeness between them, always reinforcing that the differences were important and that they did not make it impossible for any of them to participate.

With the understanding that, in Activity, Dynamics and Project Workshops, "[…] at the moment of action, defenses, mental or behavioral ties loosen" (Pereira & Malfitano, 2014, p. 1), making it possible to shorten distances, dissolve prejudices, rethinking conceptions and also being transformed by encounters with differences, it was possible to observe the overcoming of initial barriers and openness to the Club's proposal.

The main reasons identified as a cause of enmity between some participants referred to rumors that circulated around the school about the affective and sexual choices of some girls, conduct considered inappropriate, such as the use of psychoactive substances, the history of previous relationships with boys at the school, the way they spoke and behaved at the Club and at school, in addition to the judgment on the circulation spaces of some participants outside the school, such as the "*revoadas*[2]".

With regard to rivalry, women are the group most victimized by sexist oppression and, during the Workshops, especially in the first three, where conflicts and enmities gained centrality, it was possible to identify the consequences of sexism in the relationship between women. About this, Hooks (2019, p. 79) discusses

[2] The term became popular in São Paulo *funk* and in the outskirts, through several hits released in recent years, which refer to the socialization meetings of young people who gather around different cultural expressions such as music, dance, among others, and make visible, through the body, clothes and behaviors, the different ways of expressing oneself in front of the world. In these meetings, they exchange, experiment, have fun, produce, dream, in short, live a certain way of being young and are almost always associated with violence, marginality and perversion.

> […] sexism is perpetuated by social and institutional structures; by individuals who dominate, exploit or oppress; and by the victims themselves, socially educated to act in complicity with the status quo. […] We were taught that our relationships with each other do not enrich us, but, on the contrary, leave us even poorer. We were taught that women are "natural" enemies of each other, that solidarity will never exist between us because we neither know nor should unite. And these lessons were very well learned.

The Clube das Meninas then became a space to unlearn these lessons, learn to live and work in solidarity between girls/women and recognize where these gender constructions come from that distance women from each other and perpetuate violence.

In this sense, the strategies used during the workshops not only provided an important and powerful resource for understanding their realities within the scope of research, but, mainly, in line with what Farias & Lopes (2021b) points out, as a possibility of social occupational therapy promote awareness processes, collaborate to disentangle sexism from the relationships established there, based on the recognition of the "internal enemy", which refers to the internalized sexism that makes us compete with each other for patriarchal approval, look at each other with envy, fear and hatred (Hooks, 2018).

The social issues of gender that constantly permeated the Clube das Meninas and that, at first, brought to the surface the conflicts and enmities between the participants, were not left aside (because that would not be possible), but became a mediating resource, as they promoted dialogue, discoveries, reflections, and awareness of each person's role in combating sexism.

What is it like to be a girl/woman?

The first theme developed at the Clube das Meninas aimed to encourage participants to reflect and share their perceptions about what it is like to be a girl/woman, based on each one's individual experience, and also identify who the women of their lives are, those who inspire, influence and are their references. This approach was intended to encourage them to recognize themselves in each other, even with their individualities and differences, breaking the initial barrier of enmity and focusing on raising awareness and affection when listening to each other's stories.

The first aspects that caught attention refer to the immediate association of being a girl/woman with the responsibility of carrying out domestic tasks, the difficulty of feeling good about one's image due to the current aesthetic standard, causing great damage to self-esteem and triggering questions of mental health, such as recurring anxiety attacks, self-harm and suicidal ideation, in addition to pointing out that living in an abusive relationship is part of what it is like to be a girl/woman.

With regard to domestic tasks, there was a consensus among the participants that, as they were girls, they had the responsibility to ensure that they were carried out, even if they lived with more people in the house. Participants who had brothers, reinforced the difficulty for them to understand the importance of dividing tasks, even the most basic ones, such as organizing their own room, taking care of their own clothes, replacing items when they are finished or providing the food itself.

Although they all recognized that domestic tasks should not be the sole responsibility of the girls and women in the house, there is a certain conformity and disbelief regarding possible changes in this scenario, especially because, even though it causes fatigue and prevents them from dedicating themselves to other activities, they consider that boys and men *"don't know how to do it the right way"* (sic).

Reports about domestic tasks being the responsibility of women/girls reinforce that the sexual division of domestic work is unequal and unfavorable to women and that the perception of gender roles "[…] constructs a feminine and masculine identity that imprisons men and women in its limits" (Torrão Filho, 2005, p. 136), maintaining inequalities in different areas.

Saffioti (2004, p. 75) explains that:

> Inequality, far from being natural, is imposed by cultural tradition, by power structures, by the agents involved in the web of social relations. In relationships between men and women, gender inequality is not given, but it can be constructed, and often is.

Thus, it is possible to understand how and why girls reproduced in their reports and perceptions the place of women linked to the domestic environment, this being a historically and culturally constructed combination, including as a mechanism for structuring capitalist society (Federici, 2019).

Body, beauty, self-image, aesthetic procedures, weight, self-esteem, fatphobia, neglect, digital influences, and fitness, as well as loneliness due to often hating one's body. There were many reports during the meetings on the topic of how being a girl/woman is linked to aesthetics, especially as an element that causes suffering, being present in the lives of all participants.

Naomi Wolf (2018, n.p.), in *"The myth of beauty: how images of beauty are used against women"*, deepens the discussions on how the ideology of beauty has strengthened to assume the function of social coercion that the myths of motherhood, domesticity, chastity and passivity have not been able to impose so successfully in recent decades, which also aimed to "[…] eliminate the legacy left by feminism, at all levels, in the lives of Western women".

The author argues that every generation, since around 1830, has had to face its version of the beauty myth, since "[…] like many ideologies of femininity, it changes [the beauty myth] to adapt to new circumstances and calls into question the effort that women make to increase their own power" (Wolf, 2018, n.p.). Inherent to this, the "[…] conscious manipulation of the market", made up of powerful and billion-dollar industries, such as diets, cosmetics, aesthetic plastic surgery and pornography, continues to grow through "[…] capital made up of unconscious anxieties and manage, through in turn, through its influence on mass culture, use, stimulate and reinforce hallucination in an upward economic spiral" (Wolf, 2018, n.p.).

Being a fat girl/woman was a widely discussed issue among the participants, highlighting aspects related to the naturalization of fatphobia and the neglect experienced by many for *"being overweight"* (sic). The school environment is the most cited space when they report situations of bullying and fatphobia that they have experienced.

Girls who did not identify as fat are not free from aesthetic pressure, bringing reports of constant dissatisfaction with their own bodies, daily comparisons with other girls/women and the tireless struggle to always be "pretty". In this aspect, social networks were cited as triggering questions about self-image, resulting in dissatisfaction and low self-esteem.

Aesthetic procedures and a "*fitness life*", issues so widespread in the media, by digital influencers as something simple and possible for everyone, were also highlighted as a desire by some participants. They recognize the damage caused by the consumption of such content, citing impacts on mental health due to dissatisfaction with their own bodies. Some even reported that they had already had episodes of anxiety and isolation, had stopped wearing some clothes because they thought they were inappropriate for their body or had used them to hide it (clothes in larger or smaller sizes), had bad thoughts about themselves, in addition to having already taken medication to lose weight and/or having adhered to diets and prescriptions suggested by digital influencers.

For Wolf (2018, n.p.),

> The myth of beauty at the moment is more insidious than any mystique of femininity that has emerged so far. [...]. The contemporary damage caused by the system's reaction is destroying our physique and exhausting us psychologically. If we want to get rid of the dead weight that has once again transformed our femininity, it is not elections, pressure groups or posters that we will need first, but rather a new way of seeing.

Medeiros & Zanello (2018) question whether public policies developed for women and those resulting from the Psychiatric Reform dialogue with each other about the impacts of gender-based violence on women's mental health and point out that this has not been clearly treated as a risk factor for mental health. Although the Secretariat for Policies for Women (SPM), created in 2003, and later designated the Ministry until 2015, institutionalized the gender issue and incorporated its specificities into public policies, with regard to mental health care, the view with a gender bias in diagnoses and treatments/care still depends on individual professional conduct.

Zanello (2014, p. 116) states that gender bias causes great discomfort in the area of mental health, "[…] as it undermines the certainties of a supposed neutrality, brings the intimate to the political and questions the very power relations in this field, as well as its values". Many situations of gender-based violence against women end up being disqualified and reduced or pathologized and medicalized in the clinical context.

At the same time that the participants demonstrate that they suffer the consequences of aesthetic pressure, it was possible to observe the difficulty of not referring to the bodies of other girls and women in a derogatory way. As already mentioned, the rivalry and enmity that became more evident at the beginning of the Club contained components that reinforce this aesthetic demand for the "perfect body" and the comparisons between them.

In this sense, gender devices act to undermine relationships between women and highlight how "[…] rivalry, resentment and hostility provoked by the myth of beauty are deep" and how

> [...] painful it is for women to talk about beauty because, under the myth, a woman's body is used to hurt another. Our face and body become instruments to punish other women, often used without our control and against our will (Wolf, 2018, n.p.).

Furthermore, the experience of abusive relationships as a girl/woman was also brought up by all participants, with reports that demonstrated the beginning of affective and sexual relationships from a very young age, mostly with older boys and men, and which exposed them to situations of violence of various orders. Data relating to affective and/or sexual relationships, especially abusive relationships, will also be developed later, but it is important to emphasize that this issue was associated with the experience of being a girl and a woman.

Everyday life, invisible work, self-care and the pandemic

The second theme worked on aimed to understand how part of the daily life of the girls who participated in the research was structured, so that it was possible to investigate which activities made up their daily lives, what was considered a priority for them, which significant activities they developed and, also, what are the challenges and difficulties in consolidating a daily life that they consider enjoyable to live.

The main points identified refer to: a) the difficulty of reflecting on where and how they spend their time; b) responsibility for domestic tasks and care for third parties, with unanimous agreement between them; c) the dimension of self-care as little present in the participants' daily lives – they even had difficulty reflecting on what this care would be and; d) the pandemic, which further intensified each person's responsibilities, but according to them, there were no other impacts on their daily lives.

Systematizing, on paper, according to the proposed activity, the daily life lived daily was not a simple task. Thus, the first point related to the difficulty of reflecting on where and how they spend their time was identified in the reports of all participants. As explained by them, there is no habit of thinking about everyday life, so that some activities are carried out automatically, without being able to identify the amount of time they end up dedicating to carrying them out.

In this aspect, Heller (2016) argues that all people are born inserted into their daily lives, so that, mediated by the relationships and social groups in which they are inserted, they learn and live. Farias & Lopes (2021a, p. 5) discuss how this everyday life can become alienated and point out

> [...] the need for subjects to understand themselves in the world consciously and as agents, in which the mechanical and utilitarian do not forge alienations, and that individuals, groups and classes understand themselves as actors in collective life, capable of bringing about transformations and creative life.

Activities related to domestic tasks and caring for others were initially made invisible, making it necessary to list as an example the possible activities carried out in these areas (cooking, washing dishes, caring for family members, taking siblings/cousins to school/daycare). The naturalization of domestic tasks and caring for others as an

obligatory part of daily life and, consequently, the lack of recognition of the time they spend when such tasks occupy a significant part of their days reinforce this alienation from everyday life and, even more so, from the invisible role that they exercise because they are women and girls.

Society reinforces gender stereotypes in many ways, where care activities and domestic tasks are assumed to be the responsibilities of women and girls, conditioning them to a private life. This reality is explained through the concept of "sexual division of labor", which refers to the distribution of men and women in the labor market, in trades and professions, in the variations in time and space of this distribution, in addition to how it is associated with the unequal division of domestic work between the sexes (Hirata & Kergoat, 2007).

Hirata & Kergoat (2007, p. 599) conceptualize the "sexual division of labor" as:

> […] the form of division of social labor resulting from social relations between the sexes; more than that, it is a priority factor for the survival of the social relationship between the sexes. This form is historically and socially modulated. Its characteristics include the priority assignment of men to the productive sphere and women to the reproductive sphere and, simultaneously, the appropriation by men of functions with greater added social value (political, religious, military, etc.).

It is important to mention that, in the capitalist and patriarchal system in which we live, productive work gains centrality to the detriment of reproductive work, and domestic work is not recognized as a generator of wealth, even if it guarantees the basic needs of food, rest and comfort are met, so that dedication to external work and production is possible. With this, a hierarchy is established that governs the organization of social time, where productive and paid work time takes precedence over other times, especially in women's daily lives (Brasil, 2012).

There was a consensus regarding the tiredness and overload experienced in the domestic environment due to being held responsible for the activities mentioned above. Although it was proposed to reflect on the days from Monday to Friday, there were reports that on weekends "[…] *it gets even worse because everyone is at home*" (sic), referring to the increase in domestic tasks.

It is at this moment that reports emerge about being responsible for a large part of the domestic tasks, with an unequal division between the other residents of the house, especially men, specifically brothers and cousins, a fact that is heightened in situations where the mother or guardian works outside the home. Those who have children at home shared that they spent a large part of their time caring for them, often needing to give up activities they would like to do (going out with friends, being outside, studying).

The weight of domestic tasks informs about the restriction of these girls' daily circulation, as they dedicate a considerable part of their time to carrying out these tasks, even when they have the desire to carry out other activities. Circulation does not happen by itself, "[…] it depends on technical, organizational, social, cultural, economic and political factors"; in the case of women and girls, it is also conditioned by gender, "[…] marginalizing desire, emancipation and the search for meaningful social participation" (Farias & Lopes, 2021a, p. 8).

The school – in the case of these participants, the full-time school – gains centrality in the dialogue and appears as an obstacle to experiencing activities that they consider important and significant, especially in the areas of professionalization and employment. Although they recognize the importance of studies to achieve their life projects, there was a repeated complaint that studying full-time interferes with the possibilities of participating in courses and programs for insertion into the job market, such as those related to Technical Professional Education, provided by the Federal Institutes, for example, in addition to those of learning, provided for by Law no. 10.097/2000, carried out by educational institutions of the S system (SENAC, SENAI) or others, which are linked to the National Learning Services (SNA).

For the participants, studying was restricted to the period in which they were at school, so none of them declared participating in another activity in this field. They all expressed a desire to take courses in different areas, but, due to the school period, the possibilities are quite restricted due to the schedule. It was not uncommon for statements related to the desire to leave school or change to one that was not full-time.

Although the desire of the participants to experience training and qualifications in the technical and professional sphere is understood as expectations of social advancement, we advocate here a school that encourages a humanist and civic education of its students, opposing the liberal and hegemonic understanding of a school, especially at the high school level, is dualistic: depending on the social class, the objective is training for work or higher education (Nosella, 2015).

The social and political situation in Brazil has brought with greater intensity the already well-known discourse of the need for Technical Secondary Education, capturing part of the school community and society, which do not envisage other life possibilities that are not related to insertion in the job market. Thus, when the school does not directly dialogue with these desires, it loses its meaning, making it necessary, therefore, to rescue the humanitarian value of education over and above its utilitarian value. During the Club, it was possible to understand that the meaning attributed by the participants to school, in general, is not positive, so that in many passages they mention that being at school is a hindrance, failing to recognize this space as an opportunity for sociability, for expansion of repertoire, fun, the possibility of learning new things and even becoming a social support network or necessary path for building their life projects.

An element that also drew attention during the activity refers to the fact that they have few moments in their daily lives dedicated to self-care, understood here as:

> […] a set of processes of constitution of the subject in which it is important to establish an intensity of relationships between oneself, relationships in which the subject is able to take themselves (and their relationships) as an object of knowledge and action. It is through self-relations in production that the subject can transform themselves. Thus, the subject finds their uniqueness through the appreciation and knowledge of themselves carried out through care as an ethical practice (Depole & Ferigato, 2022, p. 296).

Initially, three practices were cited as self-care by the participants, namely: doing their own nails, watching series, and sleeping. When suggested that they think better about other activities that gave them pleasure and that were meaningful, the participants

were unable to identify them, exposing the emptying of daily care practices and the little repertoire in relation to what they understand as self-care, in addition to the incorporation of being a girl/woman, who is always linked to the care of others.

In relation to the Covid-19 pandemic, during 2020, participants reported that changes in their daily lives, during the period in which they were taking classes remotely, were related to the increase in time dedicated to domestic tasks and caring for children. third parties, being forced to take on more responsibilities at home, as "[…] they had nothing to do", as their guardians said, corroborating broader studies on this topic (Plan International, 2021). Despite this, some participants reported that having remained at home during this period privileged getting closer to their family.

The abrupt change in daily life, the impossibility of interacting with teachers and classmates, as well as the difficulties imposed by social distancing policies, the fear of the virus and the risk of loss of income or unemployment were not elements brought up by the participants.

Despite numerous reports about the difficulty of accessing classes virtually and the lack of infrastructure for this, many did not want to return to school, justifying their lack of motivation, as in the remote environment it was easier to achieve the necessary grades, as the charge and the level of difficulty of activities and tasks was lower on the part of teachers. Resuming daily life after the most critical period of the pandemic, especially with regard to returning to school, was not evaluated positively by the participants, who shared difficulties in socialization and bonding, in addition to difficulties in readapting with school schedules and tasks.

Teaching mediated by technology, which required a readjustment in the relationships that are established daily between members of a school community, became, for the participants, a way of not being in person at school, a place that, in previous reports, was already identified as a space they did not like to be in. Thus, it is possible to problematize the new relationships promoted and created through virtual space, where the learning process and even the link with school did not occur equally for all students and further widened educational and gender inequalities. which were exposed (Guizzo et al., 2020).

The research also revealed that the lack of meaning for high school was worsened by the pandemic, so that returning to school later was difficult to the point that they even thought about not returning. Lebourg & Coutrim (2018) discuss how, for many young people from the lower classes, high school is faced with a series of difficulties in staying, due to the offer of formal, unattractive disciplinary content and problems with creating spaces for sociability that value their extracurricular culture.

Related to this, Dayrell (1996) problematizes the homogenization of students, which ignores what is experienced by them and does not establish a relationship with school and extracurricular knowledge, reverberating in a disarticulation that even distances them from school and everything that it can be in their lives, aspects that were aggravated by the pandemic and that need, even more so at this later stage, to be dealt with.

In this sense, we reflect here on the need to reinvent public schools, especially after the Covid-19 pandemic, to create meanings that mobilize the desires of young girls, but not only, to attend school daily, in defense the importance of Basic Education as elements that support the construction of life projects.

Affective and/or sexual relationships

The theme of affective and/or sexual relationships was present in all Clube das Meninas meetings, sometimes with reports on situations that were happening at that moment in the participants' lives, sometimes with reports on situations experienced in previous relationships.

To make the theme easier to develop, a card game constructed by the participants was proposed, categorized in two ways: 1) cards that brought situations and statements about the experience of sexuality; 2) letters that addressed situations and statements related to the experience of abusive relationships.

During the game, a specific report about the experience of domestic and family violence, which even led to a request for an urgent protective measure by one of the girls, triggered a deeper dialogue about the Maria da Penha Law, the cycle of violence and the importance of the support network in these moments. Furthermore, the report encouraged other participants to also share situations of violence in their emotional and/or sexual relationships. It is important to mention that the oldest girl in the Club was only 18 years old, highlighting her exposure to violent situations in her first relationships.

The same girl also shared reports of sexual violence, a situation in which she was invited to go to a boy's house. He, at a certain point during the visit, asked her to accompany him to his room to get a charger and then locked the door. According to the participant, "[…] *it happened but it didn't happen*" (sic), and continued saying that she did not want to be in that situation "[…] *what was I going to do? It was there and... I didn't want it*" (sic). The report is understood by her as a situation of sexual violence, but it was never exposed or reported. At the time, she was 12 years old.

Based on this report, consent and sexual violence were discussed, pointing out examples that covered less popular forms of this type of violence (such as removing the condom during sexual intercourse without the person noticing, for example), but equally common. The topic caused discomfort and surprised some girls who did not even know that sexual violence does not refer exclusively to rape by penetration, exposing weaknesses in information.

The cards present in the game also raised discussions about sexual freedom, highlighting the social conventions of gender in the participants' positioning, which reinforced stereotypes and condemned sexual conduct and practices that women and girls could develop, such as kissing more than three people in one night, for example. It was a consensus that they have often labeled other girls for behaving in ways considered inappropriate and vulgar.

Jealousy was also brought up by many girls as an element always present in relationships, and which often triggers female rivalry, insecurity, arguments and excessive control in relationships. Some participants reported that they have stopped talking to some people at their boyfriend's request and that controlling social networks, accessing passwords and conversations is also a common and expected practice.

In addition to motivating physical aggression, jealousy is also valued by adolescents as an expression of love and care. In a study with young Brazilians, Nascimento & Cordeiro (2011) show that controlling behaviors, restricting the other's freedom, swearing, and slapping are often perceived as jokes between lovers.

When asked about how they dealt with their own jealousy, reports emerged that they had scratched, pinched, or slapped their boyfriends, as a way of containing them or expressing dissatisfaction with the situation. Threats of physical aggression against other women and girls motivated by jealousy were also part of the reports.

There were no reports on the approach to content on affective and/or sexual relationships in everyday school life, highlighting the need for educational actions and prevention of gender violence, supported by the Brazilian Constitution (Brasil, 1988), by the Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education (Brasil, 1996), by the National Education and Diversity Guidelines, by the Secondary Education Curricular Guidelines (art. 16), prepared by the National Education Council, and by the Maria da Penha Law (Brasil, 2006).

Throughout the development of Clube das Meninas, directly or indirectly, the affective and/or sexual relationships already experienced by the participants crossed the themes addressed, either reiterating their importance in the construction of the participants' identity and self-image or materializing the numerous statistics that denounce exposure to gender-based violence among women and girls in their relationships, with impacts on their daily lives and life projects.

Support social networks

In order to understand how and what are the social support networks of the girls who participated in the Girls' Club, it was proposed that they list the people, services, equipment or places that make up their support networks, understanding that, according to Bardi & Malfitano (2014, p. 44):

> […] they can be of a formal nature, represented by forms of articulation between government agencies and/or with social networks, private organizations or groups that allow them to face problems; or informal, when they refer to a set of spontaneous interactions capable of description, which may be composed of friends, family, religious assistance, illegal insertions, among others.

After reflecting on this, a puzzle with 7 pieces that, together, formed a heart, was delivered inside an envelope. The participants were instructed to name each piece with a component of their support network and to glue it to a sheet of bond, so that, when they fit together, the puzzle was completed.

Once this was done, they were also instructed so that, outside of the heart, they could name which components the participants missed and would like to have in their social support networks. Only one participant did not insert the terms "*family*", "*parents*", "*father*" and "*brother*"; all others brought reports of disruption or fragility in family and parental relationships. Distancing from the parent and breaking ties were also recurring reports.

The lack of friendly relationships to compose this support network was also present in the reports of most participants. The feeling of not having anyone to count on, to a large extent heightened in times when they are experiencing difficult situations, were brought with sadness. Furthermore, one of the participants faced difficulties in

identifying who made up her support network, even differentiating herself from the others when she points out the "medicine" and her "room" as part of this network, aspects that point to processes of medicalization of life.

Medicalization is understood as:

> […] the process through which the issues of social life – complex, multifactorial and marked by culture and historical time – are reduced to a type of rationality that artificially links the difficulty of adapting to social norms and organic determinisms that would be expressed in illness of the individual (Conselho Federal de Psicologia, 2015, p. 11).

Thus, it is understood that suffering cannot be dissociated from the relationship between culture, socioeconomic situation, gender, age group and a series of other social markers that intersect with the private universe of life. The participant who described the medicine and her room as components of her support network presented a sociability and daily life marked by the absence of support networks of any kind, demonstrating that her difficulties went beyond the demands of health care (Malfitano et al., 2011; Contatore et al., 2019).

Clube das Meninas is also mentioned as part of the support network for most participants. When the Club was mentioned for the first time, many reports emerged about the relationships built with the help of the meetings, the importance of the discussions raised, in addition to the management and mediation of situations that arose over the months in each person's life, the which often went beyond the space of the club and research, unfolding into Singular and Territorial Monitoring (Lopes et al., 2014), developed by the occupational therapist responsible for the actions.

Through the Follow-ups, which fostered greater bonding and closeness with some participants, it was possible to identify, more explicitly, what was proposed as research objectives, given that challenging situations were often related to some violation of rights, and they interfered significantly in various dimensions of their lives, such as school, for example. Many young women accompanied, when they were experiencing these challenging situations, were absent from school and, consequently, from the Club, returning after the actions resulting from the monitoring.

Associated with this, there were reports about how they felt welcomed and listened to when they shared difficult experiences and situations, making the Club a space of trust and care, which justified their stay and the desire to continue in the following semester. Despite this, it was also exposed that, on many occasions, the Club also addressed issues that generated discomfort and triggered unpleasant feelings, as it made them come into contact with aspects that were difficult to deal with in their daily lives.

During the activity, the absence of formal spaces understood as a support network was also identified, especially the school, social assistance, and health equipment. With regard to school, no participant reports feeling comfortable seeking support in the school environment, unaware of support channels, reference professionals or ways to reverse this situation and build a bonding relationship. A recurring statement when asked why this happened was because they did not feel the availability of school professionals to be a support network and the fear of exposure and/or judgment if they sought help.

There was great resistance on the part of the participants in recognizing the power of the school as a support network and the importance of encouraging the entire school community to also recognize the school environment as a safe, protective place and source of support to face various situations, including those related to violence and the difficulties they experience outside the classroom and which directly affect the way they feel about this space.

The fragility of the participants' relationship with the school space and what it could be locates the problems and challenges in the relationship between young people and school and between school and young people. The data found should not be used in a biased way, feeding the idea of failure of the school institution or stigmatization of young people, but rather, encourage reflections that enable the construction of paths to rethink the school we want, considering the multiple dimensions of the condition youth, taken in this study by the gender marker, its socio-historical-cultural construction, as well as its current needs (Dayrell, 2007).

It draws attention to the fact that the participants recognize, in the Clube das Meninas - an element of PEI and developed within the school -, a support network, but do not recognize the school itself in this place, highlighting potential for building social and collective care, as long as they are intentional and work with differences.

In this sense, the school institution will need public investments, its professionals and educators will need better conditions to develop educational actions and practices that dialogue with the needs of these young people. In order for the school to become a significant space, capable of providing care to the school community and, thus, becoming a support network that encourages the construction of emancipatory life projects, it must necessarily become central in government plans in all spheres (municipal, state and federal).

Spirituality and religion were mentioned in some reports, but did not gain centrality in the discussions. Affective and/or sexual relationships emerged as a support network only for participants who are in a relationship. Casual relationships or relationships that do not fall within what is considered a "serious relationship" were not mentioned, although it was known to us that they existed.

Through the proposed activity, many issues identified in previous meetings gained important contours, as the participants presented few and fragile social support networks, highlighting the few options they can turn to when they experience difficult and risky situations, also exposing the lack of access and non-recognition of basic services and equipment as possible ways to become a support network.

Based on the analysis of social cohesion, in the work and relational network axes, more specifically in Castel (2012), young people of school age should not consider work as a necessity. However, knowing the reality of young girls' families, which are constituted by precarious insertions, when there are, at work, associated with fragile or even absent support networks, indicates the conformation of situations of social vulnerability.

This confirms the relevance of proposing social occupational therapy actions that focus on strengthening social support networks as a way of coping with situations of social vulnerability, taking into account the notes made by the participants about the significant place constructed by the Clube das Meninas.

Furthermore, it also indicates the need to rethink and transform the ways of establishing relationships in public schools, in order to favor the creation of social support networks among young people themselves and between professionals and young people, so that the school can effectively contribute to facing these situations by strengthening its students' support network, being, in addition to being a place of learning, a space of care.

Life projects

The last topic addressed, in addition to the others, aimed to understand the life projects of the girls who made up the Club and, consequently, give them the opportunity to express their dreams and understandings about what they consider to be "life projects" for each one.

The life projects expressed by the participants were categorized into 5 dimensions: a) Professionalization and insertion in Higher Education; b) Insertion into the job market and financial stability; c) Financially help parents and/or family members; d) Form a family (get married and have children); e) Travel, exchanges, and personal projects.

The desire for professionalization and/or inclusion in Higher Education was present in all reports. The understanding that studies can enable a more dignified life that is far from social vulnerabilities was a consensus among the participants. However, it was possible to observe that, even though they were in high school, the vast majority had no knowledge of ways to access higher education, or other ways of continuing their studies, and even less about affirmative action policies from which they could benefit.

Professionalization is a life project that has been postponed by the participants because they study at a full-time education school, which does not allow them to take courses during periods other than school. Once again, this point gains centrality and all participants expressed dissatisfaction with the workload within the school, making it impossible to participate in various courses of interest to them.

The second item refers to insertion in the job market, a recurring issue on the Club's agenda, since access to consumer goods and survival depend on each person's financial possibilities. "Financial stability" appeared in several statements as a means to achieve other projects, such as helping parents and/or family, for example.

Starting a family, more specifically getting married and having children, appeared in only two reports during the activity. In the first, gestating a child was not presented as a desire, even causing many surprises to the group, especially when the alternative presented was adoption. In the second report, it was possible to identify elements related to religion and romantic love, attributing more conservative conceptions to marriage, family, and children.

On this issue, many girls shared the gender expectations that society reproduces, especially those related to motherhood and the need to formalize relationships through religious marriage. It was also questioned the fact that the biological argument is constantly used to convince that women are born with maternal instinct and consequently need to follow a "step by step" process: dating-marrying-having children.

Projects that were not related to work and professionalization were uncommon in the reports, suggesting that such elements have gained centrality, in conjunction with

the curricular proposal of the life projects discipline included in the São Paulo curriculum, which maintains the dualist conception of High School, as previously mentioned (Nosella, 2015).

Even if the correlation between the schooling process and the construction of life projects is understood, it is necessary to question, as has been pointed out by research in the area of education, regarding the content worked in these disciplines, with a view to expanding perspectives and possibilities, in addition to instrumentalization for the world of work, such as training to exercise citizenship (Silva & Estormovski, 2023; Vieira da Silva et al., 2023). When reports emerged that were detached from this work-professionalization binomial, they were related to travel, exchanges, and artistic projects. Few participants brought dimensions related to self-care, leisure, health, and time organization.

Despite this, it is understood that, for young people, inclusion in work can provide partial autonomy in their lives, becoming a central element in the daily lives of these young women precisely because, through this, they begin to expand their daily circulation across territories. and spaces that were not possible without access to income, such as attending cultural spaces or carrying out extracurricular activities outside their territory, for example (Lebourg & Coutrim, 2018).

As Dayrell (2007) explains, a significant portion of young people only become capable of experiencing their youthful condition due to work, which is directly responsible for guaranteeing resources for leisure, consumption, dating, for expanding the network of relationships and, consequently, for everyday circulation.

Daily circulation is understood as a substantial dimension of life,

> […] forged in historical, social, political, subjective and cultural processes that are established by social reality, in contradictions, dilemmas, accidents, alienation, power relations, inequality, resistance, choices, the possibility of freedom, of conservation, transformation, in intentionalities, that is, in the praxis that makes up everyday life (Farias & Lopes, 2021a, p. 6).

Along this path, the life projects mentioned by the participants who point to work and professionalization as central dimensions are crossed by their experiences and ranked according to their needs.

Regarding this, Farias (2021) proposes the distinction of life projects into two areas. The first refers to necessity projects, which are linked to the most urgent life; in the case of the reports presented by the participants, the search for work, the responsibility to help at home and the need for financial autonomy. The second comprises dream projects, which involve more distant intentions, such as entering Higher Education, travel, exchanges, and personal projects (making a documentary and having your own art gallery), for example.

From this perspective, it is essential to reflect on the field of concrete possibilities (Velho, 2003) of these young women, which implies recognizing the data pointed out by them in the course of this work, especially those related to the gender marker, linked to class, which show important inequalities and restrictions for the construction, expansion and implementation of your projects, whether they are within the scope of needs or dreams.

Conclusion

In this research, the stories of the young students highlighted that in their daily lives there are still numerous obstacles to achieving gender equality and that these obstacles interfere significantly in the construction of their life projects, as they delimit their fields of possibilities, restrict their autonomy and, consequently, their opportunity for emancipation. Furthermore, they allowed the recognition of the limits and possibilities of this encounter between therapeutic-occupational practice and gender issues.

Based on Paulo Freire, to think about a critical professional approach, intended to build, together with populations in situations of social vulnerability, movements for social transformation that consider the crossing of micro and macrosocial issues, "[…] we have the ethical responsibility to reveal situations of oppression" (Freire, 2020, p. 49).

In this sense, thinking about the work that was developed throughout this research and what we can indicate as the contribution of occupational therapy in working with young girls, in promoting life projects, with and in public schools, initially means recognizing the fundamental role of technologies social occupational therapy to reveal these situations of oppression to which this group especially, but not only, are exposed. Furthermore, the place of these technologies to build theoretical and practical knowledge in the face of these complex problems, which involve individual and collective subjects, as well as contradictions, social and cultural inequalities in/in Brazil, is also highlighted (Farias, 2021).

The Activities, Dynamics and Projects Workshops, a collective intervention methodology of social occupational therapy, also used here for the production of data in occupational therapy research, provided the development of an effectively participatory research, with closer contact with and between the participants, through the promotion of spaces for coexistence with diversity, the promotion of sociability and experimentation with possibilities, the strengthening of social support networks and actions to prevent and combat gender-based violence, in addition to strengthening and re-signifying the school institution .

Based on what Clube das Meninas was and what Farias & Lopes (2021a) point out as the importance of, taking everyday life as an object of occupational therapy, operating processes with the populations with which they work to critically understand their daily lives, we can indicate that the workshops produced constituted a space for suspending this daily life by creating a space-time that favored processes of reflection and awareness. This fact occurred as discussions were encouraged that demanded a break with mechanized, pre-conceived and erroneously transmitted actions and understandings from generation to generation by culture, such as conceptions of gender, for example, which often give "[…] the impression that they are a consequence of natural causes, not recognized as the result of action and social relationships" (Farias & Lopes, 2021a, p. 3).

During the process of appropriation of the Club by the girls, through activities as a mediating resource for the work that allowed greater contact and coexistence between the participants themselves, providing a space for bonding, listening, exchanges, questions, problematizations, protagonism and, also, production of care, the possibility of overcoming the everyday alienation to which we are constantly exposed was built.

Unveiling the world of oppression and, therefore, committing, in praxis, to its transformation, is part of the assumptions that guide what we understand about

awareness, an aspect placed as one of the objectives of social occupational therapy that takes Paulo Freire's references as a driver of action, as stated by Farias & Lopes (2021b). In this aspect, it is essential to recognize the centrality and importance of awareness processes for the expansion of life projects, as, as they put the limits of young people's field of possibilities on the agenda, they call on them to deal with them and equip them with tools. for that.

Freire (2020, p. 98) reminds us that

> As men [and women], simultaneously reflecting on themselves and the world, increase the field of their perception, they also direct their "gaze" at "perceived" which, until then, although present, were not stood out, "they were not placed by themselves".

In this way, social occupational therapy and its social technologies encourage these awareness processes to occur in a way that, thinking about oneself and the world, simultaneously, within the scope of one's social relations and ways of life, contributes so that their life projects are not restricted only to what is socially placed in the sphere of work or studies and to issues that involve the future time, near or far, but which are directly related to their life stories, identifications, circulation, relationship with the territory and with institutions, with their social support networks or lack thereof, as well as with their living conditions, which involve their individual but also collective trajectories.

Associated with this, these awareness processes promoted by the workshops can also allow a reflection on oneself, on who one is, on what one's desires, projects, dreams are, a fundamental aspect for thinking about who one wants to be, in what life projects. want to dedicate themselves, in addition to understanding that they do not necessarily need to be immutable or aligned with gender conventions, or any others, that affect girls and women.

The opportunity to experience new activities, reflections, and discoveries through encounters with differences, provided by the workshops, also allows them to delve deeper into reading their individual needs, (re)discovering the right to choose, the right to recognize oneself as a subject who does, who thinks, who experiences and who desires. This process contributes to subverting the logic of pre-established and determined destinies and life projects, privileging dream projects.

The aspects mentioned, from the perspective presented here, should form an educational action aimed at the exercise of autonomy and the processes of emancipation, not only when one is a girl/woman, but as an essential aspect to be worked on, understanding all social, cultural, and historical crossings that impose differences in condition between men and women. Emancipation necessarily involves the freedom to choose which life projects one wishes to live, associated with awareness of the obstacles that impose restrictions on its implementation and the practical action of intending and breaking with the most diverse forms of oppression mentioned in this work.

This process is highlighted as a possibility of contributing to the production of meaning for school, a fundamental aspect for young women (but also boys) to want to be in this environment and, in the same way, for the construction of their life projects. The occupational therapist, from this perspective, can act as a facilitator, with actions

that are not about maintaining the school "just" as a place to teach knowledge, but capable of dialoguing with the life history of the school community, offering spaces for experimentation, exchanges and building bonds that value individuals and where coexistence prevails between differences, the sharing of cultures, encounter, listening, recognition of the other as an ally and the collective construction of strategies for coping with the most diverse problems.

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Corresponding author
Maribia Taliane de Oliveira
e-mail: maribiaoliveira@gmail.com

Section editor
Profa. Dra. Késia Maria Maximiano de Melo