

Research report

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Predictors of Decent Work Among Black Brazilians Workers

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Abstract

This study investigated the predictors of decent work for Black workers in Brazil, grounded in the Psychology of Working Theory (PWT). The relationships among marginalization, economic constraints, work volition, and racial microaggressions in the perception of decent work were examined using data from 400 Black workers in a survey study. The results indicate that marginalization, economic constraints, and racial microaggressions negatively affected the perception of decent work, particularly in the dimensions of safety, compensation, and organizational values. Work volition, especially in contexts of structural constraints, emerged as a central factor in the pursuit of decent working conditions. Additionally, the study highlighted the interconnectedness between racial inequalities and the perception of decent work. The findings reinforce the need for public policies and institutional strategies that promote racial equity and improved labor conditions for the Black population.

Keywords: Social Justice; Racism; Career Development; Occupational Health.

Preditores do Trabalho Decente em Pessoas Negras Brasileiras

Resumo

Este estudo investigou os preditores do trabalho decente para trabalhadores negros no Brasil, com base na *Psychology of Working Theory* (PWT). Analisou-se a relação entre marginalização, restrições econômicas, volição e microagressões raciais na percepção de trabalho decente, utilizando dados de 400 trabalhadores negros em um estudo *survey*. Os resultados indicaram que marginalização, restrições financeiras e microagressões raciais impactaram negativamente a percepção de trabalho decente, especialmente nas dimensões de segurança, remuneração e valores organizacionais. A volição, particularmente em contextos de restrições estruturais, emergiu como fator central na busca por condições decentes de trabalho. Além disso, o estudo evidenciou a interconectividade entre desigualdades raciais e a percepção de trabalho decente. O estudo reforçou a necessidade de políticas públicas e estratégias institucionais que promovam equidade racial e melhores condições laborais para a população negra.

Palavras-chave: Justiça Social; Racismo; Desenvolvimento Profissional; Saúde do Trabalhador.

Predictores del Trabajo Decente en Personas Negras Brasileñas

Resumen

Este estudio investigó los predictores del trabajo decente para los trabajadores negros en Brasil, basado en la *Psychology of Working Theory* (PWT). Se analizó la relación entre marginalización, restricciones económicas, volición y microagresiones raciales en la percepción del trabajo decente, utilizando datos de 400 trabajadores negros en un estudio de tipo *survey*. Los resultados indicaron que la marginalización, las restricciones financieras y las microagresiones raciales impactaron negativamente la percepción del trabajo decente, especialmente en las dimensiones de seguridad, remuneración y valores organizacionales. La volición, particularmente en contextos de restricciones estructurales, emergió como un factor central en la búsqueda de condiciones decentes de trabajo. Además, el estudio evidenció la interconectividad entre las desigualdades raciales y la percepción del trabajo decente. El estudio reforzó la necesidad de políticas públicas y estrategias institucionales que promuevan la equidad racial y mejores condiciones laborales para la población negra.

Palabras clave: Justicia Social; Racismo; Desarrollo Profesional; Salud del Trabajador.

Work is a central element in human life, fulfilling essential roles related to survival, identity, and social structuring. Castel (2005) argues that work provides ontological security and social protection, constituting a determining factor for inclusion and recognition in capitalist society. Similarly, Blustein (2013) emphasizes that work fulfills three fundamental human needs: survival and power, social connection, and self-determination. Thus, work is not limited to income generation but also encompasses fundamental psychosocial aspects related to well-being and civic engagement.

The concept of decent work, proposed by the International Labour Organization (ILO) in 1999, seeks to establish minimum parameters to ensure dignified employment

conditions globally (International Labour Organization [ILO], 1999). The concept comprises four central dimensions: the promotion of fundamental rights at work, the generation of quality employment, social protection, and social dialogue (Abramo, 2015). However, authors such as Santos (2019) and Spink (2009) question the universality of this model, arguing that it was developed based on formal economies in countries of the Global North, making it necessary to consider the specificities of the Global South, where informal work and the precarization of labor relations predominate.

In the Brazilian context, 46% of individuals were unemployed or outside the workforce in 2023. When these data are analyzed from a racial perspective, Black and Brown individuals accounted for 57.1% of those outside the workforce, 65% of the unemployed population, and 45.8% of informal workers (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística [IBGE], 2024). According to the Ministry of Labor and Employment (MTE, 2024), the Black population shows greater participation in precarious occupations and, in some cases, is subjected to conditions analogous to slavery. In 2023 alone, 2,492 workers rescued from such conditions self-identified as Black, corresponding to 81% of the total number of rescued workers (MTE, 2024).

Additionally, disparities are observed in wages and access to positions of prominence. On average, White individuals earn 69.9% more than Black and Brown individuals (IBGE, 2024). With regard to the occupation of strategic positions, Black individuals represent only 5.9% of members of corporate boards of directors, whereas White individuals occupy 93.8% of these positions (Instituto Ethos, 2024). Studies indicate that, beyond direct racial discrimination, structural racism significantly affects the opportunities for professional development and career advancement of Black workers (Ancillotti & Martins-Silva, 2022; Barros & Reis, 2023).

Beyond structural inequalities and direct discrimination, subtle manifestations of racism, such as racial microaggressions, also affect the career trajectories of Black individuals. Racial microaggressions are understood as subtle comments, attitudes, or behaviors—intentional or unintentional—that communicate inferiority, hostility, or devaluation based on race (Nadal, 2016; Nunes et al., 2025). In the work context, these manifestations may emerge in interactions with coworkers, supervisors, or clients, affecting psychological well-being, perceptions of interpersonal safety, and opportunities for professional development

and career advancement (Cabell & Kozachuk, 2022; Pitcan et al., 2018).

Zullo and Almeida (2024) argue that although the formal abolition of slavery occurred and provided freedom to individuals, public policies and social practices capable of ensuring equity were not implemented, resulting in the historical marginalization of the Black population in Brazil. Recent research has pointed to the need to expand the understanding of decent work through a psychosocial and contextualized approach. There is evidence that conceptions of work vary according to sociocultural context, such that the idea of a single model of decent work may not adequately address diverse economic and social realities (Cohen-Scali et al., 2022; Di Ruggiero et al., 2015; Ribeiro, 2020).

From this perspective, psychology has contributed to the debate by emphasizing the importance of identity and the meaning of work in the construction of career trajectories, particularly among vulnerable populations, such as low-skilled youth and informal workers (Ribeiro et al., 2021). In this way, the psychosocial perspective allows for an analysis that is more integrated and better adapted to the different forms of work in the contemporary world.

Decent work is understood as a set of structural and psychosocial factors that influence both objective working conditions and workers' subjective perceptions. At the structural level, decent work is defined as work that ensures job security, social protection, adequate compensation, and respect for fundamental rights—elements that depend on effective public policies and labor market regulation (International Labour Organization [ILO], 1999).

However, the existence of norms and regulations alone does not guarantee the universalization of these conditions, particularly in contexts marked by informality and precarization, such as Brazil and other countries in the Global South (Ribeiro et al., 2021). Moreover, economic factors, such as market stability and the availability of formal employment, are central determinants for the dissemination of decent work, as they directly influence the quality of available work opportunities (Kim et al., 2020).

From a psychosocial perspective, the perception of decent work is shaped by individual factors, such as work volition, social status, and career adaptability. The Psychology of Working Theory (PWT) posits that individuals who face socioeconomic barriers, such as financial constraints and marginalization, have reduced access to decent employment unless they possess high

levels of resilience and adaptive capacity (Duffy et al., 2016). The relationship between social status and decent work is mediated by work volition—that is, the perceived freedom to choose employment that aligns with one's needs and values (De Andrade et al., 2024).

In addition to these elements, characteristics such as a proactive personality can mitigate the negative effects of low social status, fostering better working conditions even in adverse contexts (Duffy et al., 2016). In Brazil, research indicates that decent work is also associated with a sense of belonging and contribution to the common good, revealing a collective dimension in how this concept is experienced in the country (Ribeiro et al., 2021). Thus, although decent work has a normative foundation, its realization depends on multiple interconnected factors, including both structural conditions and individual perceptions.

Psychology of Working Theory

The Psychology of Working Theory (PWT), proposed by Duffy et al. (2016), emerged as a response to the limitations of traditional vocational theories, which tend to privilege individuals with greater freedom of career choice. The PWT focuses on the intersection of structural, economic, and psychological factors to explain how different populations—especially marginalized groups—access or are excluded from decent work. This theoretical model posits that structural factors such as gender, race, sexual orientation, and economic constraints reduce workers' capacity to make autonomous choices and adapt to the labor market, directly affecting their access to decent work (Duffy et al., 2016).

From the PWT perspective, decent work is a construct composed of five components, namely: safe working conditions, which include both physical and interpersonal safety in the workplace; access to health care, referring to the availability of health services for workers; adequate compensation, which refers to receiving pay commensurate with the work performed; free time and rest, which involves the importance of work–life balance by allowing time for rest and personal activities; and organizational values that complement family and social values, referring to the compatibility between organizational values and workers' personal and social values (Duffy et al., 2017; Ribeiro et al., 2019).

The main predictors of decent work in the PWT include marginalization, economic constraints, work volition, and career adaptability (Duffy et al., 2016). Empirical evidence shows that workers who experience racial, gender, or socioeconomic status discrimination

have less access to stable and well-paid jobs—a phenomenon observed among immigrant workers in the United States (Kim, T. et al., 2022) and Asian American women (Choi et al., 2022), whose experiences of gender- and race-based microaggressions affect their perceptions of decent work. In Brazil, the study conducted by De Andrade et al. (2024) highlighted that structural inequality imposes barriers to decent employment, making work precarization a reality for many vulnerable populations.

In light of the occupational and career context of the Black population in the country, this study aimed to investigate the predictors of decent work among Black individuals in Brazil, using the Psychology of Working Theory (PWT).

Hypotheses

With the aim of contributing to the theoretical and empirical advancement of the PWT and its applicability to different cultural contexts and social groups, three hypotheses were formulated.

The first hypothesis (H1) posited that higher scores on marginalization and economic constraints would be negatively associated with the perception of decent work. The literature has demonstrated that structural racism has directly affected the socioeconomic conditions of the Black population, restricting access to education, workplace safety, and social protection (Osório, 2021; Zullo & Almeida, 2024). In addition, studies grounded in the PWT have found negative associations between these predictors and decent work among Black individuals (Kim, H. et al., 2022; Williams et al., 2023). Thus, individuals who experienced greater marginalization and economic constraints tended to experience more precarious working conditions, with fewer opportunities to attain decent work.

The second hypothesis (H2) predicted that individuals with lower scores on work volition would report lower levels of decent work, reflecting the difficulties imposed by structural inequalities in Brazil. Work volition, understood as the perceived autonomy to make career-related choices, has played a central role in the pursuit of decent work (Pires & De Andrade et al., 2022). In contexts of vulnerability and discrimination, such as those faced by Black individuals in Brazil (IBGE, 2024; Osório, 2021), it was expected that Black workers would encounter significant constraints in exercising this autonomy, particularly due to socioeconomic and institutional barriers (Osório, 2021; Ribeiro et al., 2021; Zullo & Almeida, 2024).

The third hypothesis (H3) proposed that higher levels of racial microaggressions would be negatively associated with the perception of decent work, reflecting the impact of discriminatory experiences on job quality and opportunities for career advancement (IBGE, 2024; MTE, 2024). Beyond socioeconomic constraints, racial microaggressions (Nadal, 2016) were identified as an additional factor capable of undermining the perception of decent work. Research has demonstrated that racial discrimination negatively affects not only labor market entry and employment stability but also the psychological well-being of Black workers (Williams et al., 2023).

Method

Data Transparency and Availability

The data are not publicly available because they are linked to a specific research project approved with requirements to ensure participant anonymity.

Participants

The sample consisted of 400 Brazilian participants who self-identified as Black (Black and Brown), according to IBGE criteria. Participants' ages ranged from 18 to 66 years ($M = 30.01$, $SD = 11.67$). The majority of participants were female ($N = 245$; 61.25%). Participants reported the following levels of educational attainment: no formal literacy ($N = 3$; 0.75%), elementary education ($N = 23$; 5.75%), secondary education ($N = 84$; 21%), technical education ($N = 31$; 7.75%), higher education ($N = 175$; 43.75%), and postgraduate education ($N = 84$; 21%).

Characterization of the Research and Instruments

This study is characterized as a quantitative and descriptive survey (Cozby, 2003). For the collection of primary data, the following instruments were used:

Sociodemographic questionnaire: Items designed to characterize participants. For example: *age, gender, race/color, income, education, and employment status*.

Decent Work Scale (Ribeiro et al., 2019): This instrument assesses job quality based on five domains: safe working conditions ($\omega = .75$), access to health care ($\omega = .91$), compensation ($\omega = .49$), free time and rest ($\omega = .90$), and complementary values ($\omega = .50$). Responses are provided on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from *strongly disagree* (1 point) to *strongly agree* (7 points). The free time and rest and complementary values domains require reverse interpretation (reverse

scoring). In the present study, the scale demonstrated satisfactory model fit indices (CFA: $X^2/df = 1.56$; CFI = .98; TLI = .97; SRMR = .04; RMSEA (90% CI) = .05 [.02-.07]).

Marginalization in Life Scale (De Andrade et al., 2024) aims to capture experiences of marginalization across one's life course. This instrument consists of three items, answered on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from *strongly disagree* (1 point) to *strongly agree* (7 points). In the present study, the following model fit indices were obtained: CFA: [$X^2/df = 0$; CFI = 1.0; TLI = 1.0; SRMR = 8.352 x ; RMSEA (90% CI): .00 (.00-.00); $\omega = .93$].

Economic Constraints Scale (De Andrade et al., 2024) assesses individuals' perceptions of economic constraints experienced throughout their lives. The scale is unidimensional and consists of five items, answered on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from *strongly disagree* (1 point) to *strongly agree* (7 points). In the present study, the following model fit indices were obtained: CFA: [$X^2/df = 3.23$; CFI = .99; TLI = .98; SRMR = .01; RMSEA (90% CI): .07 (.03-.11); $\omega = .89$].

Work Volition Scale (Pires & De Andrade, 2022) assesses individuals' perceptions of their ability to make career-related choices. The measure comprises three domains: work volition ($\omega = .82$), financial constraints ($\omega = .78$), and structural constraints ($\omega = .74$). The items are responded to on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from *strongly disagree* (1 point) to *strongly agree* (7 points). Higher scores on the financial and structural constraints domains indicate a greater perceived level of barriers to career decision-making. In the present study, the scale demonstrated the following model fit indices: (CFA: $X^2/df = 2.75$; CFI = .93; TLI = .91; SRMR = .05; RMSEA = .06 [.05-.08]).

Racial Microaggressions Scale (Nadal, 2016) assesses the types of racial microaggressions experienced in everyday life. In the present study, the general factor version was used. This version consists of six items, based on the original instrument and was adapted for Brazil by Nunes et al. (2024). An example item is: "Someone told me that people from my racial group are all alike." Respondents indicate the frequency with which they experienced each microaggression over the past 6 months, using adverbial markers ranging from 0 (I did not experience this event in the past 6 months) to 5 (I experienced this event five or more times in the past 6 months). In the present study, the following model fit indices were obtained: CFA: [$X^2/df = 5.85$;

CFI =.95; TLI =.93; SRMR =.03; RMSEA (90% CI): .11 (.08-.13); ω =.90].

Ethics and Data Collection Procedures

This study was approved by the ethics committee under protocol no. 67523322.5.0000.5059. Data collection employed a mixed-method approach, including online- (N = 107) and in-person administration (N = 293). For the online format, the study was disseminated through social media platforms and applications, directing interested individuals to a digital survey platform. For in-person data collection, researchers approached participants in public spaces, after confirming that participants self-identified as Black prior to questionnaire completion. Informed consent was obtained either in person or digitally. The average response time was approximately 25 minutes.

Data Analysis Procedures

Data analyses were conducted using the R software (R Core Team, 2024). The adequacy of the scale models was assessed using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), based on fit indices and criteria proposed by Brown (2015): normed chi-square (χ^2/df) ≤ 5.00 ; CFI $\geq .95$; TLI $\geq .95$; SRMR $\leq .08$; and RMSEA $\leq .06$. The Robust Diagonally Weighted Least Squares (R-DWLS) estimator was employed. Internal consistency reliability

of the scales was assessed using McDonald's omega coefficients (Trizano-Hermosilla & Alvarado, 2016). Scale scores and factor sums were analyzed using descriptive statistics, correlations among variables, network analysis, and multiple linear regression. (Epskamp & Fried, 2018).

Results

Descriptive Analyses and Correlations

Convergence among the scales was verified. Pearson's r correlations were tested. The information presented in Table 1 provides descriptive statistics and correlations among the measures.

Statistically significant convergent correlations ($p < .001$) were observed for the five domains of Decent Work. The domains *safe working conditions* and *complementary values* were positively correlated with the volition domain and negatively correlated with economic constraints, life marginalization, racial microaggressions, and the volition-related facets regarding financial and structural constraints. The *access to health care* domain showed a positive correlation with volition and negative correlations with economic constraints, racial microaggressions, and financial and structural constraints. Finally, the *compensation and free time and rest* domains were negatively associated with volition and positively

Table 1.

Descriptive Characteristics and Correlations

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1.EC	4.47	1.66	—										
2.LM	4.05	1.89	0.47***	—									
3.VOv	3.60	1.52	-0.25	-0.31	—								
4.VOfc	3.12	1.43	0.51***	0.42***	-0.33	—							
5.VOsc	3.53	1.33	0.44***	0.46***	-0.42	0.62***	—						
6.RM	2.29	1.47	0.30***	0.47***	-0.10	0.28***	0.30***	—					
7.DWwc	4.33	1.54	-0.18	-0.38***	0.25***	-0.19***	-0.20***	-0.35***	—				
8.DWhc	2.60	1.90	-0.17***	-0.09	0.14**	-0.12	-0.14**	-0.14*	0.06	—			
9.DWc	4.17	1.07	0.24***	0.18***	-0.12*	0.24***	0.23***	-0.15**	-0.09	-0.03	—		
10.DWt	4.00	1.02	0.22***	0.20***	-0.07	0.26***	0.26***	0.09	-0.06	-0.00	0.25***	—	
11.DWv	4.13	1.62	-0.14	-0.16	0.29***	-0.25	-0.28	-0.19***	0.35	0.17***	-0.04	-0.03	—

Note. EC – Economic Constraints; LM – Life Marginalization; VO – Volition and its domains (VOv – volition; VOfc – financial constraints; VOsc – structural constraints); DW – Decent Work and its domains (DWwc – Safe Working Conditions; DWhc – Access to Health care; DWc – Compensation; DWt – Free Time and Rest; DWv – Complementary Values); RM – Racial Microaggressions (unidimensional). Statistical significance: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Source: Research data (2024).

associated with economic constraints, life marginalization, racial microaggressions, and the volition-related dimensions of financial and structural constraints.

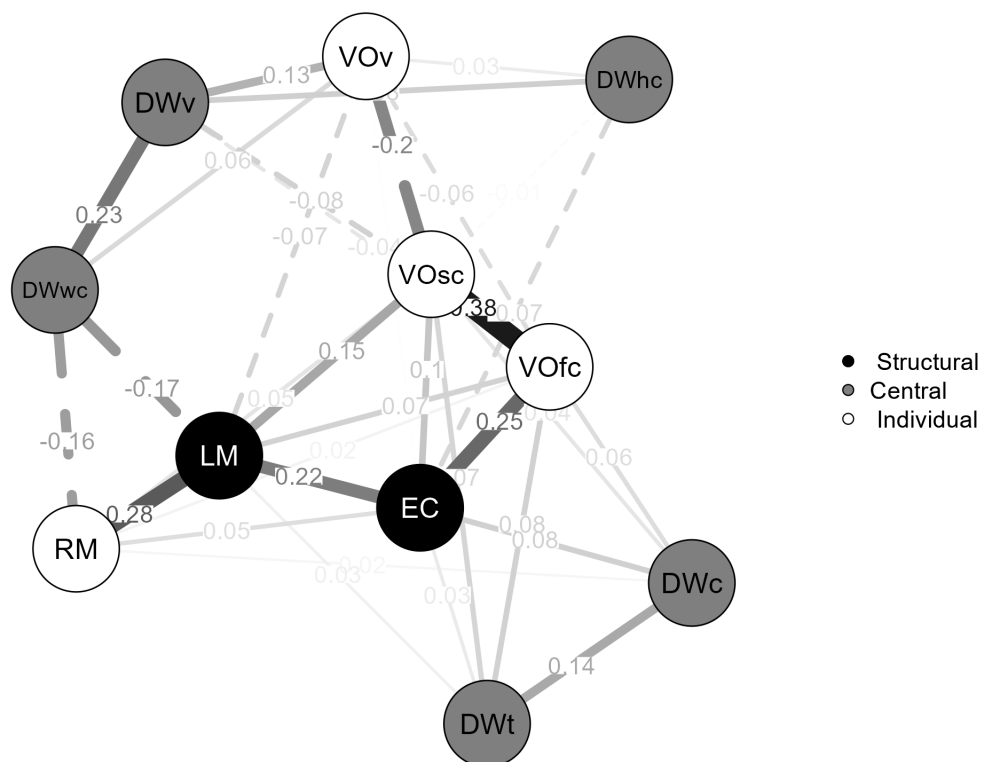
Graphical Representation of Variable Relationships

The graphical representation of network analysis provides a rapid and intuitive visualization of associations among multiple variables (Leme et al., 2020). Nodes represent the constructs examined in the study. Line thickness indicates the strength of the correlations. In addition, solid lines indicate positive relationships, whereas dashed lines indicate negative relationships. The model was estimated using partial correlation networks, applying a Gaussian graphical model regularized via the EBICglasso method (Epskamp & Fried, 2018).

Based on Figure 1, it can be observed that a central element in the network is the variable volition due to structural constraints. This central variable was directly related to life marginalization, economic constraints,

career volition domains, and the values dimension of decent work. The decent work elements showed a predominantly negative relationship with structural aspects of marginalization and racial microaggressions, particularly with regard to safe working conditions. Among the specific decent work elements, the *free time and rest* dimension showed a positive relationship with volition due to financial constraints. Similarly, the perception of decent work in the *compensation* dimension was also positively related to volition due to financial constraints and marginalization. Finally, the decent work element related to *access to health care* showed a positive relationship with career volition and an inverse relationship with structural constraints.

Figure 2 presents the closeness and strength measures in the partial correlation network among social perception (marginalization, economic constraints), individual aspects (volition, racial microaggressions), and decent work (health care, values, compensation,



Note. EC – Economic Constraints; LM – Life Marginalization; VO – Volition and its domains (VOv – volition; VOfc – financial constraints; VOsc – structural constraints); DW – Decent Work and its domains (DWv – Safe Working Conditions; DWhc – Access to Health care; DWc – Compensation; DWt – Free Time and Rest; DWv – Complementary Values); RM – Racial Microaggressions (unidimensional). Statistical significance: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Source: Research data (2024).

Figure 1. Analysis de Redes – Relações entre as variables com indicação das correlações

working conditions, free time). Closeness indicates a node's ability to influence or be influenced efficiently, occupying a strategic position within the network (Fonseca-Pedrero, 2018). Expected influence, in turn, assesses centrality by considering the sign of the connections, quantifying the variance of a node explained by its neighbors and aiding in the prediction of variable states (Borsboom et al., 2021).

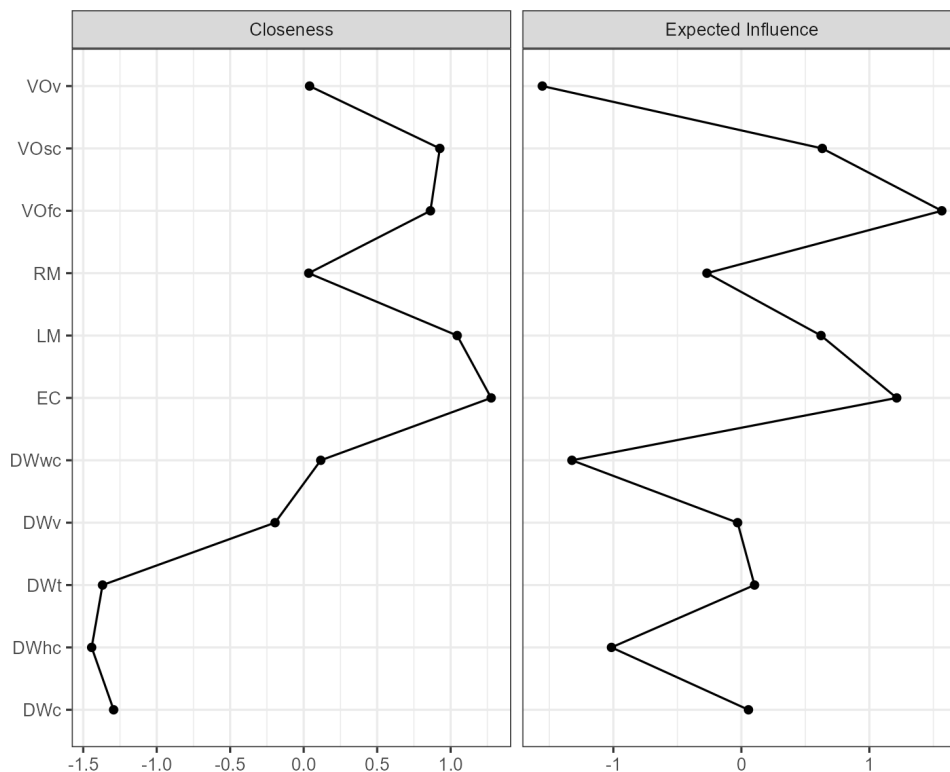
Based on the centrality graph, the variables structural constraints, life marginalization, and volition—constructs representing financial limitations and structural social barriers—showed the highest closeness values, indicating that they were the most connected and central variables in the network. In contrast, decent work aspects related to health care, compensation, and free time presented lower closeness values. Regarding expected influence, volition due to financial constraints, followed by structural constraints, showed the greatest impact on the other variables in the

system, whereas volition, which represents the capacity to make occupational and career choices, showed the lowest influence value.

Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

To examine the extent to which changes in the independent variables (contextual and individual predictors) were associated with changes in levels of decent work, five multiple regression analyses were conducted using the Enter method. Table 2 presents the results of the models for decent work across its five dimensions.

The first decent work model, related to *safe working conditions*, included life marginalization and racial microaggressions as negative predictors and volition as a positive predictor, explaining 21% of the variance in the model. This finding suggests that individuals who experienced greater marginalization and were targets of more racial microaggressions tended to perceive lower



Note. EC – Economic Constraints; LM – Life Marginalization; VO – Volition and its domains (VOv – volition; VOfc – financial constraints; VOsc – structural constraints); DW – Decent Work and its domains (DWwc – Safe Working Conditions; DWhc – Access to Health care; DWc – Compensation; DWt – Free Time and Rest; DWv – Complementary Values); RM – Racial Microaggressions (unidimensional). Statistical significance: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Source: Research data (2024).

Figure 2. Centrality measures of the subscales

Table 2.

Linear Regression Analysis

Variables	DWWC			DWHC			DWC			DWT			DWV		
	%	B	p	%	B	p	%	B	p	%	B	p	%	B	p
EC	21%	0.03	0.57	5%	-0.15	0.02	10%	0.13	0.03	9%	0.06	0.29	14%	0.04	0.50
LM		-0.24	< .00		0.04	0.56		0.02	0.72		0.08	0.23		0.04	0.54
VOv		0.19	< .00		0.10	0.09		-0.01	0.83		0.06	0.26		0.21	< .00
VOfc		0.02	0.72		-0.02	0.75		0.11	0.09		0.12	0.08		-0.11	0.09
VOsc		0.05	0.42		-0.04	0.58		0.07	0.30		0.16	0.02		-0.13	0.05
RM		-0.25	< .00		-0.04	0.44		0.03	0.55		-0.04	0.49		-0.12	0.03

Note. EC – Economic Constraints; LM – Life Marginalization; VO – Volition and its domains (VOv – volition; VOfc – financial constraints; VOsc – structural constraints); DW – Decent Work and its domains (DWwc – Safe Working Conditions; DWhc – Access to Health care; DWc – Compensation; DWt – Free Time and Rest; DWv – Complementary Values); RM – Racial Microaggressions (unidimensional). Statistical significance: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Source: Research data (2024).

levels of safety in the work environment. In addition, those who reported higher levels of workplace safety also showed a greater perception of autonomy in their career choices. Perceived decent work related to *access to health care* was predicted exclusively and negatively by economic constraints, with 5% of the explained variance, indicating that workers who reported greater financial difficulties tended to perceive lower access to health care services.

The third model, which addressed decent work from the perspective of *compensation*, identified structural constraints as the only positive predictor, explaining 10% of the variance. The positive coefficient indicates that individuals who reported greater economic constraints throughout their lives also perceived their compensation as more adequate. The decent work domain related to *free time and rest* was explained by volition associated with structural constraints, accounting for 9% of the variance. This means that individuals with higher volition in contexts of structural constraints reported less free time and rest.

Finally, the decent work element related to *complementary values* was predicted by volition (structural constraints domain) and racial microaggressions, explaining 14% of the variance in the data. The results showed that individuals who perceived a greater capacity to make occupational choices aligned with their interests tended to report greater compatibility between their personal values and organizational values. However, those who reported higher levels of structural constraints and greater experiences of racial microaggressions showed a lower perception

of compatibility between organizational values and their individual values.

Discussion

This study, grounded in the Psychology of Working Theory, investigated the relationship between structural aspects, such as marginalization and economic constraints, and individual factors, such as work volition and racial microaggressions, in the perception of decent work among the Brazilian Black population. The findings highlight the significant impact of structural variables, such as race/color, income, and social class, both on the perceived ability to make career choices aligned with personal interests and on access to work that meets the criteria for decent work, as established by the ILO (1999) and delineated in the PWT (De Andrade et al., 2024; Duffy et al., 2016; Pires et al., 2022).

Hypothesis 1 (H1) predicted that higher scores on marginalization and economic constraints would be negatively associated with the perception of decent work. The findings supported this hypothesis, demonstrating that structural marginalization and the precarization of socioeconomic conditions negatively affect entry into and retention in jobs that meet the criteria for decent work—namely, *safe working conditions*, *access to health care*, *adequate compensation*, *free time and rest*, and *complementary values* (ILO, 1999).

These results are consistent with studies showing that structural racism restricts the Black population's access to educational and professional opportunities,

thereby reinforcing historical inequalities (Osório, 2021; Zullo & Almeida, 2024). Studies involving other populations experiencing social exclusion similarly demonstrate a positive association between economic constraints and marginalization (Choi et al., 2022; De Andrade et al., 2024; Kim, T. et al., 2022). Additionally, labor indicators (IBGE, 2024; MTE, 2024) show that the Black population continues to be predominantly represented in informal employment and in conditions analogous to slavery, as well as receiving lower wages than White individuals. This finding reinforces the persistence of a scenario of economic and social exclusion within Brazil's social structure, evidenced by low levels of job security and fewer opportunities for professional advancement.

The second hypothesis (H2) proposed that individuals with lower perceived work volition would present lower scores on decent work, reflecting the difficulties imposed by structural inequalities in Brazil. The findings confirm this relationship, suggesting that perceived autonomy to make professional decisions is an essential factor for access to decent work (De Andrade et al., 2024). Work volition, understood as the perceived autonomy to make career-related choices, has played a central role in the pursuit of decent work (Pires & De Andrade et al., 2022). However, this dimension is organized into one positive domain related to choice and two negative domains associated with structural and financial constraints. As expected in H2, Black individuals who faced greater socioeconomic and institutional constraints reported lower perceptions of work volition, which negatively affected their experience of decent work. This result reinforces the idea that, for historically marginalized groups, the ability to make career choices does not depend exclusively on individual motivation (Ancilloti & Martins-Silva, 2022; Barros & Reis, 2023; Zullo & Almeida, 2024), but is directly conditioned by structural barriers and the opportunities available to them (Ribeiro et al., 2021).

Network analysis indicates that the domain of complementary values at work, related to respect for personal and social aspects of collective life (Ribeiro et al., 2019), is positively associated with perceived choice and negatively associated with financial constraints. This suggests that workers who perceive alignment between organizational and personal values experience greater professional autonomy, whereas severe financial difficulties impose structural limitations on career options. Moreover, the absence of social protection at work (Abramo,

2005) and difficulties in professional advancement (Ancilloti & Martins-Silva, 2022) perpetuate labor precarization, hindering access to decent working conditions. Racial issues further exacerbate this scenario by intensifying symbolic and institutional violence in the workplace, which negatively affects the physical and psychological safety of Black workers (Ribeiro et al., 2019; Zullo & Almeida, 2024).

Another relevant issue concerns the structural barriers that affect the perceived capacity to make choices based on one's own interests. In Brazil, the association between income and race/color is one of the main drivers of this inequality (IBGE, 2024). However, structural volition also encompasses factors such as knowledge, skills, behaviors, and cultural capital. These elements have a direct impact on educational and professional opportunities, reinforcing social inequalities and limiting career development, particularly for marginalized groups (Ribeiro, 2014; Thiry-Cherques, 2006). This means that individuals who face these barriers not only have restricted access to better working conditions but also experience difficulties in constructing career trajectories aligned with their interests and aspirations, thereby perpetuating inequality in the labor market.

Finally, Hypothesis 3 (H3) proposed that higher scores on racial microaggressions would be negatively associated with the perception of decent work, reflecting the impact of discrimination on job quality and opportunities for professional advancement. The results confirm the hypothesis that frequent experiences of racial microaggressions undermine the experience of decent work, affecting perceptions of safety in the professional environment, equity in labor relations, adequate compensation, and access to health care. Research shows that racial discrimination affects not only labor market entry and job stability but also the psychological well-being of Black workers (Williams et al., 2023). This evidence is consistent with studies indicating that microaggressions operate as subtle yet persistent barriers that hinder career progression and reinforce racial inequalities within organizational contexts (Nadal, 2016).

The investigation conducted by Cohen-Scali et al. (2022) on representations of decent work across different countries revealed that Brazilian participants emphasized, in addition to the importance of good working conditions and compensation, the relevance of work with purpose and personal fulfillment. The authors also concluded that workers in countries with

developed economies, such as Iceland, France, and Switzerland, hold perceptions more closely aligned with the ILO (1999) criteria, highlighting a significant difference in relation to Brazilian perceptions of decent work and reinforcing how a country's level of development directly affects the possibility of making career choices.

The evidence from this study has important implications for understanding racial inequalities in the world of work. The expectations supported by the hypotheses reinforce the need for public and organizational policies aimed at promoting racial equity in the labor market, including measures that reduce the structural barriers faced by Black workers. In addition, the results suggest that strategies to address racism in the workplace should consider not only the promotion of equal opportunities but also the need to strengthen career autonomy and volition among Black workers by expanding access to professional training, mentoring, and support networks.

From a theoretical perspective, the adoption of the Psychology of Working Theory (Choi et al., 2022; De Andrade et al., 2024; Duffy et al., 2016; Kim, T. et al., 2022; Pires & De Andrade, 2022) yields findings that are consistent with social justice paradigms and with the commitment of a scientific field of career and work to understanding the experiences of individuals in situations of vulnerability, exclusion, and marginalization. In the present study, the PWT theoretical framework made it possible to understand how contextual and structural factors that reproduce exclusion and barriers for the Black population in Brazil also affect their opportunities to experience decent work.

Beyond limitations related to sample refinement, the need for more in-depth analyses should be highlighted. It is essential for future studies to advance the understanding of the effects of decent work on the Brazilian Black population. One limitation of this study was the limited discussion of specific dimensions of decent work in relation to the national literature, due to its scarcity, in comparison with the international literature. Understanding the consequences of experiencing work deprived of decency and dignity is not only a social and scientific commitment but also an essential element within the theoretical framework of the PWT (De Andrade et al., 2024; Duffy et al., 2016). In this sense, the theoretical proposition positions itself as a relevant reference within psychological theories and professional practices—especially in the fields of vocational and career guidance, as well as organizational and work psychology—by contributing to the development

of strategies that promote greater equity and inclusion in the labor market.

Final Considerations

Race/color, in and of itself, constitutes a constraint on professional and career development and affects access to decent work. This study sought to advance the understanding of intersectional factors that further intensify the barriers faced by this population. Accordingly, it was found that the domains of decent work related to safe working conditions and complementary values are the most negatively affected by race/color, through life marginalization and racial microaggressions. In addition, structural elements related to the perception of work volition also negatively affect perceptions of access to adequate working conditions and the fulfillment of values.

Thus, in seeking to overcome these adversities, the promotion of access to cultural capital emerges as an important strategy for addressing the structural barriers faced by Black individuals. Multifaceted approaches that involve both public policies and individual and collective strategies are essential. First, affirmative action policies within institutions should be strengthened to ensure that Black individuals have access to opportunities for educational and professional development. In addition, vocational and career guidance programs, as well as mentoring initiatives, are fundamental to helping this population navigate intersectional barriers by expanding cultural capital and fostering critical awareness, thereby contributing to the overcoming of historical inequalities and to professional advancement.

Simultaneously, it is essential to create spaces for socialization and cultural exchange in which Black individuals can share experiences, access educational resources, and expand their cultural repertoires. Initiatives such as study groups, free training courses, and access to cultural events should be promoted by both public and private institutions. It is also crucial for organizations to adopt inclusive practices, such as fostering a diverse work environment and valuing Black professionals, by recognizing the historical challenges faced by this group and providing spaces for professional development and career advancement. In this way, by expanding access to cultural capital and dismantling structural barriers, it becomes possible to promote inclusion and reduce disparities in access to decent work and career development.

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