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"This pain you feel is a lack of work": intersections of violence and work in the daily lives of women living in rural areas

"Essa dor que você sente é falta de serviço": interseções da violência e trabalho no cotidiano de mulheres que vivem em áreas rurais

Abstract

Objective: To analyze the intersections between violence and work in the daily lives of women living in rural areas. **Methods:** A qualitative study based on the Life Stories method, carried out in two small municipalities in Rio Grande do Sul, in 2022, with women ≥ 18 years old who had lived most of their lives in rural areas. Of the 29 interviews conducted, five were selected because of their thematic density and rich narratives about work and violence. Thematic analysis was adopted, combining inductive coding, guided by the data, and deductive coding, guided by theoretical references. **Results:** The invisibility of women's pain was observed, stemming from the lack of recognition of their work, which reinforces economic dependence and restricts their choices. Violence is used as a mechanism for control, maintenance, domination and exploitation of women's work. In this way, the partner keeps the wife under threat and socially isolated, generating labor power and capital for himself. When a woman becomes ill, her pain is devalued, in an abandonment of care and affection. **Conclusion:** The intersection between work and violence produces an overload and exploitation of rural women, with negative repercussions on their physical, emotional and reproductive health. Suffering is aggravated by abusive relationships and barriers to accessing health services.

Keywords: Violence Against Women; Gender Violence; Women Workers; Rural Area; Workers' Health.

Resumo

Objetivo: Analisar as interseções entre violência e trabalho no cotidiano de mulheres que vivem em áreas rurais. **Métodos:** Estudo qualitativo ancorado no método Histórias de Vida, realizado em dois municípios pequenos do Rio Grande do Sul, em 2022, com mulheres ≥ 18 anos que residiram a maior parte da vida em áreas rurais. Entre as 29 entrevistas realizadas, selecionaram-se cinco, em razão da densidade temática e riqueza narrativa sobre trabalho e violência. Adotou-se a análise temática combinando codificação indutiva, orientada pelos dados, e codificação dedutiva, guiada por referenciais teóricos. **Resultados:** Observou-se a invisibilidade da dor das mulheres, decorrente da falta de reconhecimento de seu trabalho, o que reforça a dependência econômica e restringe suas escolhas. As violências são utilizadas como mecanismo de controle, manutenção, dominação e exploração do trabalho feminino. Assim, o parceiro mantém a esposa sob ameaça e isolada socialmente, gerando para si força de trabalho e capital. Ao ficar doente, a mulher tem sua dor desvalorizada, num abandono de cuidados e de afeto. **Conclusão:** A intersecção entre trabalho e violência produz sobrecarga e exploração das mulheres rurais, repercutindo negativamente na saúde física, emocional e reprodutiva. O sofrimento é agravado por relações abusivas e barreiras no acesso aos serviços de saúde.

Palavras-chave: Violência contra a Mulher; Violência de Gênero; Mulheres Trabalhadoras; Área Rural; Saúde do Trabalhador.

Introduction

The sexual division of labor came about through a process of historical and social construction, separating it into productive and reproductive. Productive work, associated with the generation of capital, was consolidated as a predominantly male space. On the other hand, reproductive work, relegated to women, was understood as not generating capital, especially work related to the domestic and care domain¹. This division, besides differentiating male and female work, has generated inequalities between men and women belonging to the same social class. As a result of feminist achievements, women have entered the economic world, but they are still primarily responsible for domestic and care work².

In the capitalist logic, domestic tasks performed by women are recognized as reproductive and do not generate direct profit for the system. This devaluation contributes to their denial as legitimate work, and they are often romanticized as expressions of affection or moral duty³. Moreover, household chores are invisible, devalued, repetitive, and exhausting, and are only noticed when women stop doing them⁴.

Work in rural areas is no different from this logic, but it is more nuanced and complex, given that the workplace is also the home. According to Brumer⁵, women's work in rural areas is based on the sexual division between domestic and farming activities. According to the author, the work carried out by women is characterized by domestic activities, caring for children, the elderly, the disabled, and the sick, as well as property maintenance activities such as caring for small animals, vegetable gardens and orchards, among others. In addition to these activities, the work they do alongside their partners is often devalued and understood only as "help". As a result, women don't take part in managing the property, buying, and selling products, etc.

For women living in rural areas, the activities of reproduction, production, and care do not have a set time to begin and end; they are continuous jobs, often carried out in overlapping ways, such as holding a child while cooking and telling the elderly that it's time to take their medicine. Sometimes women must take their young children to the fields and shelter them in the shade under the care of their older brothers. When they return home, they still must take care of all the chores that have accumulated throughout the day, while the husband rests^{6,7}.

Most women living in rural areas have such an intense working day that they are prevented from resting, reflecting, studying, organizing collectively, understanding that their work also generates income, and that they can exercise their social rights. In this way, the power asymmetries between men and women become even more evident, favoring male power and becoming a deep and structural violence⁸.

Oppression and violence against women are deeply rooted in patriarchal structures and are the product of a historical process that has naturalized gender inequality and legitimized practices of domination and silencing of women⁹. Violence against women in rural areas manifests itself in multifaceted ways, encompassing physical, psychological, sexual, moral, and property aggression¹⁰. In addition to these more recognizable expressions, other forms of oppression are also present, such as work overload, exclusion from decision-making processes related to property, lack of documents and economic autonomy. The confluence of these elements contributes to the erasure and invisibility of rural women's work, compromising the exercise of their social rights, such as retirement^{9,11}. In this sense, the boundaries between women's working and personal lives are blurred, not only because of their domestic and care work, but also because they are in charge of rural activities. The lack of a distinction between the spaces "inside" and "outside" work increases the impact of health problems, which are intrinsically related to living and working conditions. These conditions are marked by exposure to pesticides, solar radiation, occupational accidents, and long working hours, producing risks and aggravations to physical, psychological, and reproductive health. This situation is aggravated by different forms of violence, as well as barriers to accessing information and health services¹².

The aim of this article is to analyze the intersections between violence and work in the daily lives of women living in rural areas.

Methods

This is a qualitative study guided by the principles of the Life History Method. This method is not intended to provide a real and true picture of the near or distant past, but rather a concrete experience of a specific life¹³. According to Becker¹⁴, the life story is like the “*image of a mosaic*”, in which each piece added contributes a little to the understanding of the whole, taking diversity into account, because “*different fragments contribute differently to our understanding: some are useful because of their color, others because they highlight the contours of an object*” (p.104)¹⁴.

The study was carried out in two small municipalities belonging to the 12th Regional Health Coordination of Rio Grande do Sul, both with a population of around 7,000 inhabitants and approximately 48% of the population living in rural areas. The choice of these locations was related to the main researcher's proximity to the territory, since she is originally from the region, which favored the establishment of dialogue with municipal health secretaries, Community Health Agents (CHAs), and key informants, as well as facilitating travel in rural areas. It should be noted that the distances between the urban center and the rural areas ranged from two to 45 km, with access exclusively via dirt roads. The researcher who went into the field has a background in public health, with experience in coordinating field research.

The research was supported by the Municipal Health Secretariats (SMS) and relied on the collaboration of the CHAs and a female community leader to find participants and talk to the women. The researcher held meetings about the project with the CHAs and the community leader and then scheduled dates to accompany them on routine home visits, at which time the women were invited to take part in the research. The type of sample was therefore by convenience.

The interviews were carried out in the women's homes, while they were alone. A guiding script was used, which covered the following topics: 1) history of childhood, adolescence, and adulthood; 2) experiences related to violence at some point in life; 3) considerations about how events may have affected their life; 4) support for dealing with the situation of violence; and 5) sociodemographic information. The script was pilot tested before the interviews began.

All the empirical material was audio-recorded and later transcribed in full. A total of 29 interviews were carried out, lasting an average of 45 minutes. The research took place between September and October 2022. After each interview, impressions were recorded in the field diary.

After the research was completed, an Executive Summary containing a summary of the results was given to the SMS, CHAs, and community leaders. Some copies were left for the CHAs to distribute to interested women.

For this article, five interviews were selected based on their thematic density and richness of narratives relating to experiences of work and violence, themes which emerged spontaneously in the women's accounts, and which stood out in relation to the empirical material as a whole.

The thematic analysis proposed by Braum and Clarke¹⁵ was adopted, combining inductive coding, guided by the data, and deductive coding, guided by theoretical references. The information obtained from the interviews was initially organized into descriptive codes, which allowed the identification of units of meaning. These codes were then grouped into sub-themes that shared common meanings and then brought together into two central themes capable of expressing broader and more in-depth interpretations of the data analyzed. The first theme deals with the invisibility and lack of recognition of rural women's work. The second addresses domestic violence as a mechanism for controlling and maintaining women's work in rural areas.

The interviews were coded with the letter “E” followed by numbers (E1, E2...) to preserve the anonymity of the interviewees. The letter “E” refers to Elizabeth Teixeira, a peasant leader from Paraíba whose trajectory is marked by resistance to the structures of the latifundia, violence, losses, and family estrangement. Elizabeth has established herself as a symbol of rural women's resistance and has contributed to the expansion of women's participation in leadership spaces and in demanding the right to live and work on the land.

The research was approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the Sergio Arouca National School of Public Health, Fiocruz, on May 9, 2022, under the protocol number 5.395.759. All the participants signed an informed consent form.

Results

The interviewees were aged between 48 and 69, three were white and two were brown, four had incomplete primary education, and one had recently finished secondary school. Two were married, and one was in her second marriage. The others were divorced and they all had children. The women lived between four and 18 kilometers from the city center and when asked about their profession, four declared themselves as farmers and one as a rural worker. All of them had a rural producer invoice booklet^b, either individually or jointly with their husbands. Two of them lived on land they had bought with their own resources, one on land belonging to her son, and the other two on land belonging to a state agrarian reform settlement, still without ownership documents, but with a letter of consent to use the land. Three were rural pensioners (Table 1).

Table 1 Characteristics of the women interviewed who live in rural areas

Id	Characteristics
E1	58 years old, self-declared white, studied up to the 7 th grade of elementary school, married for 41 years, and had two children. She lived 4 km from the city center on her own land, received a rural pension, and sold surpluses from her horticultural production.
E2	54 years old, self-declared brown, studied until the 6 th grade of elementary school, separated 13 years ago, and had four children. She lived 4 km from the city center on her own land, received financial aid from the government, and worked as a cleaner.
E3	48 years old, self-declared white, completed secondary school (had incomplete elementary school and continued her studies after separating), had been divorced for 15 years and was currently married, had two children from her first marriage. She lived 15 km from the city center, on state-owned settlement land, still waiting for the final land ownership documents. She received financial aid from her work in the union and did subsistence farming.
E4	69 years old, self-declared brown, studied until the 4 th grade of elementary school, separated 21 years ago, and had three children. She lived 18 km from the city center, on her son's land, received a rural pension, and relied on her son for financial support.
E5	58 years old, self-declared white, studied until the 5 th grade of elementary school, separated six years ago, and had three children. She lived 13 km from the city center on land belonging to her brother and received a rural pension.

Source: Prepared by the authors.

The thematic map illustrates the organization of the themes and sub-themes that make up the results developed below. The square format represents the themes and the circle the sub-themes (Figure 1).

^b A tax document used to record the sale of agricultural and livestock products.

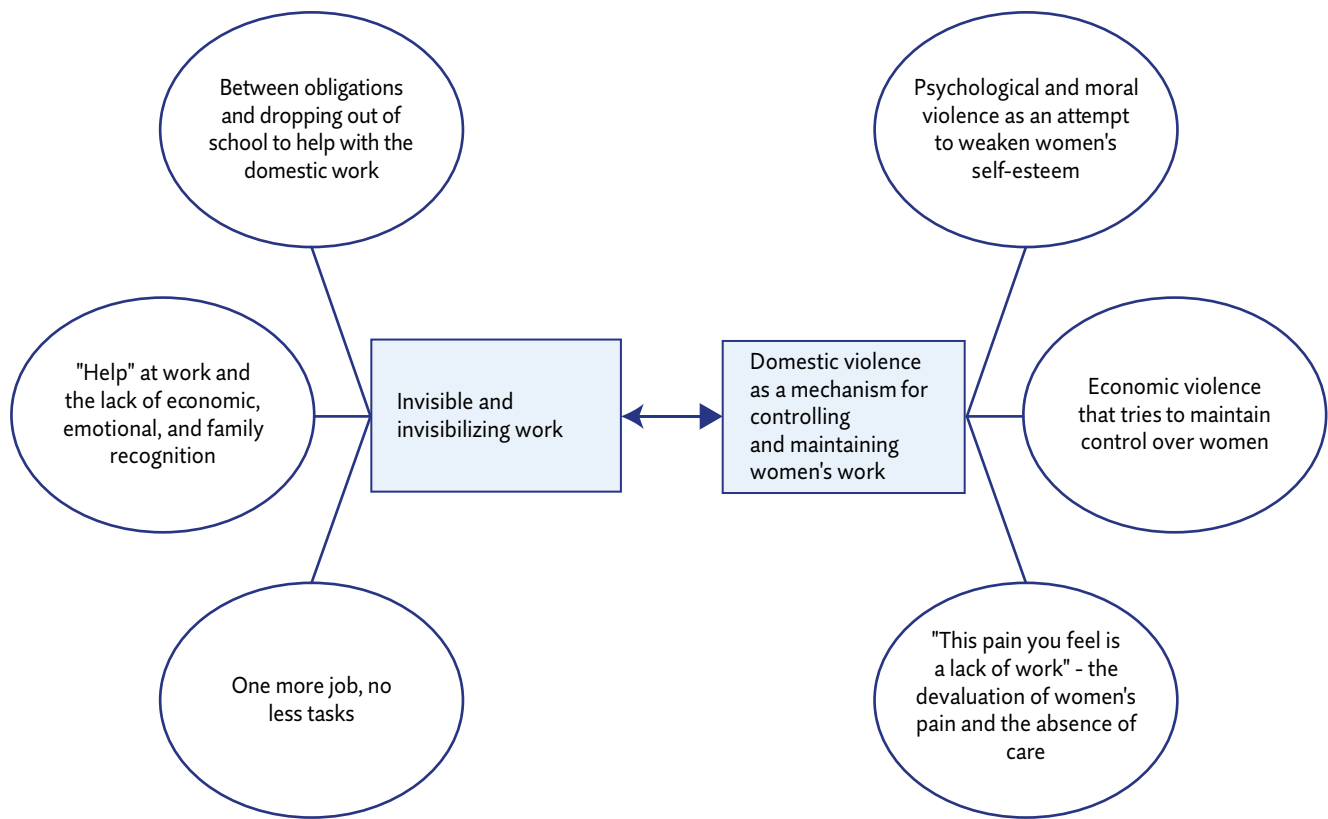


Figure 1 Thematic map with the themes and sub-themes of the analysis
 Source: Prepared by the authors.

Theme 1: Invisible and invisibilizing work

Between obligations and dropping out of school to help with domestic work

The interviewees reported the family's economic limitations, the need to help with family chores from childhood, and the difficulties of continuing with their studies:

At the time I must have been six or seven years old, I was already sweeping the house, helping to make food, I had to help. (...) When I was 12, I went to work as a maid. The other maids, if they earned 150, I earned, like, 50 a month. I was exploited (E1).

I studied until sixth grade, then I had to stop to start working so we could afford things, to help my mother (E2).

Another aspect that influenced dropping out of school was the distance and conditions for getting to school:

I lived in a campaign, it was difficult, neighbors were difficult, the school was difficult, (...) And my parents were very poor. (...) We even had fear of living in the public (...) we grew up and went to a school, 30 kilometers on horseback. We would saddle the horse before dawn, then we would go to lunch (...) and help our mother with her chores. The next day it was all over again, with rain, wind, hot sun, a bit of everything, feeling hungry (...) So we didn't have much of an education, we don't have much of an education, because it wasn't possible (E4).

The “help” at work and the lack of economic, emotional, and family recognition

In adulthood, when they were married, the women continued to do all the domestic work, care and “help”, but now also in the fields:

I worked, I helped planting, I worked in the fields, I took care of the vegetable garden, milked the cows, everything, I went to the fields to plant soybeans. In the mornings I stayed at home with the children, made lunch for my husband, brother-in-law, and son and did the laundry by hand. Everything. Then, in the afternoon, I'd go to the fields and plant all afternoon. Then, when it was five o'clock [in the afternoon], I'd go home, the children would come home from school, and then I'd have a cow to water, milk, make dinner, bathe the children, everything like that (E1).

In addition to working with her partner in the fields and other chores, one of the interviewees was also responsible for looking after her brothers-in-law who lived with the couple. However, this task was not recognized either economically or emotionally, but as part of her duties, even if it overloaded her:

For example, like me, I stayed at home, worked, and had brothers-in-law who lived together. They never said “thank you very much” to me for the years I washed, cooked, ironed, and even washed their shoes. And I think it's violence against women (E1).

The lack of recognition for women's rural work impacts on the lives of women, prevents them from having economic autonomy and taking care of themselves, revealing feelings of annulment, of economic non-existence. This economic violence highlights the devaluation and appropriation of women's work in the marital and productive structure, burdening women physically and emotionally:

and the financial issue is a violence. Women have no money! Because I used to go to the fields, work, make food, and I used to tell my husband, when the harvest was over, give me 50 bags of soybeans so I could buy something. He never did. Because then I'd work harder too. Never. It was always zero. That little bit of money for you to buy clothes, something. It affects us a lot (E1).

One more job, no less tasks

The interviewees recounted their journeys in search of economic independence and how, over time, they searched for alternatives. However, having an “extra job” that would make a profit for them and the whole family meant one more task, as they still had to “cope” with what was assigned to them as household chores:

There came a time in my life when I felt that I really needed money, because I didn't have any. I wanted to buy something, I never had any. (...) And then I thought about the need to have my own income. Then I had the idea to start making things to sell, to make them at home and take them to the city, to sell everything I made. Then I started making bread, cookies, and things from the vegetable garden. I would take them and sell them, and time went by. This helped with the family structure, because with the money that came in from these sales, there was enough left over from the produce my husband harvested to buy his brother's land. And that's how he was able to afford the whole land. (...) I worked straight through from Sunday to Sunday and always got up before dawn (E1).

One of the interviewees points out that, in the context of the rural union, women's participation tends to intensify their work overload:

the man comes home, has lunch, and goes back. In order to take part, we double our working hours, because when a woman comes to a meeting, she leaves her bread, her lunch, her laundry, she works twice as hard the day before and twice as hard the day after the meeting, in order to make up for it. The man doesn't, he leaves the house, leaves everything there, and the woman takes care of it, in most cases (E3).

These situations also reveal precarious relationships, in which women don't have time for themselves, for rest, leisure, and health care.

Theme 2: Domestic violence as a mechanism for controlling and maintaining women's work

Psychological and moral violence as an attempt to weaken women's self-esteem

Among the interviewees' accounts, there were expressions of violence in which psychological and moral violence stand out. Furthermore, the fact that they occur in families seen as "structured" means that the events remain veiled. The partner's use of psychological and moral violence appears to be an attempt to weaken the woman's self-esteem and isolate her, keeping her under his auspices. In this way, this dynamic hinders the woman's quest for independence:

the first time we went out and started working, we couldn't find a way. (...) And hearing every day from someone: "you're no good", "you're this and that", we hear this so much, we end up getting into that thing of I'm no good, I'm this or that, it's true (E2).

In many cases, the woman has deep scars from a life lived under the strong control of her partner, which is expressed through deprivation of access to public, financial, and decision-making spaces, configuring what can be understood as psychological and symbolic violence that demarcates a place of female submission and even a certain infantilization:

what I went through, when I was alone, I never went to the bank, never with my husband, he never took me to the bank. I never went to a store on my own. I never received milk money, he bought me clothes without me being there, nothing. Absolutely nothing. If he went, I went after him. I'm not ashamed to say (E4).

She also talks about how she overcame her difficulties and rebuilt her place in the social world, taking on basic tasks in everyday life that were previously denied to her, but this was only possible after her separation: "Today I go to the bank, I get paid, I pay bills, I farm, I pay for the electricity, I go to the market, I go to the doctor, I do everything, but I suffered, I suffered a lot until I got the hang of the business" (E4). It's important to note that both interviewees reported experiences associated with depression, as well as recurring feelings of sadness and loneliness.

Economic violence that tries to maintain control over women

It was common to hear reports of the use of economic violence, combined with threats from the partner in an attempt to keep the woman in the relationship, as if she didn't have another option in her life:

I used to make cheese, I used to make 1,200 [BRL] a month, that was six years ago, I used to milk cows. I delivered it every weekend, but the money didn't come to me, it went into his pocket. (...) And if I touched his wallet, he turned into a monster. So I avoided it (E5).

Moreover, the partner kept the family with the bare minimum:

We [wife and children] only had food. I was married for 20 years and got two pairs of pants from him. He never gave me any money: "Hey, woman, go and buy yourself some clothes", never. He used to say, when I told him I was leaving, "go, food is expensive, no one will give it to you". But, my God, I don't earn the food, I work for myself and my children (E5).

The lack of "options" doesn't just concern the woman's desire, but the structure that limits her possibilities: there are no resources, no support networks, no effective public policies that guarantee alternatives to that life. The structure of the patriarchal system means that violence is naturalized, reinforcing a feeling of collective powerlessness:

But she [the aunt] didn't have a choice either, she had nowhere to go, she had to stay with him. She had no money, nothing. The basics inside the house, a wood-burning stove, the basic things. So, there's nothing. (...) And there are a lot of women who suffer, who I know suffer with their husbands, who don't have a choice. And that's it (E1).

“This pain you feel is a lack of work” - the devaluation of women's pain and the absence of care

When physical pain, overwork, and negligence on the part of the partner intertwine in a cruel way, a scenario of affective and structural abandonment is created, sustained by the devaluation of female pain and the denial of the right to care. Here we see a classic mechanism of symbolic and psychological violence: the woman's pain is delegitimized and turned into an accusation. The absence of care by the partner, especially for the wife's health, accentuates abandonment, emotional isolation, and reveals the naturalization of male indifference to the woman's health. The same man who isolated her from the family does not provide the minimum:

I had a heart condition (...) Knowing that I worked 12 hours a day, that I worked until noon at home, I did everything. And in the afternoons, I worked in the fields. My ex-husband, who said it was a lack of work, never let me go to the doctor. He'd say, 'That pain you have in your chest, that's lack of work'. (...) I always faced it alone. Even when I went to the doctor, because I have a back problem, I never counted on him [ex-husband]. He never took me to the doctor. Nothing, nothing, nothing. He never said: 'I'll go there with you', never. I had my uterus removed and he didn't accompany me. I was discharged alone and went home alone (E5).

What stands out is the hierarchy of the partner, in the figure of the “boss”, who determines and assesses the pace of the work, how much is enough, without respecting the conditions of the work or those who carry it out. This highlights the links between precarious rural work, violence and the processes of illness that have a direct impact on women's health.

Discussion

The rural women interviewed reported various forms of violence in their daily lives and work. When women living in rural areas don't have their work activities recognized as essential, capital-producing work, they become invisible and erased, destroying their self-esteem and making them dependent on their partners. The countless activities they carry out, as well as being endless, involve them in such a way as to prevent them from participating in society. The devaluation of their pain and the excessive workload add to their partner's affective neglect in caring for their health and well-being.

The “endless” work carried out by women, and here specifically women living in rural areas, with little or no financial return, places them as their partner's “servants”, in a place that lacks social prestige⁴. The invisibility of rural women's work was such that they were left on the margins of their social rights, such as retirement, maternity allowance, personal and professional documentation. From the 1980s onwards, rural feminist movements campaigned for rural women to be recognized as “rural workers” and no longer as “housewives”. Other important campaigns were for the right to social security, a benefit that was effectively won in 1991¹⁶, and for personal and professional documentation with the “No rural worker without documents” campaign, which provided guidance on how to make the necessary documents, such as rural producer invoice booklets, so that women could access their labor and social security rights¹⁷⁻¹⁹.

Over the years, rural feminist movements have won and are still fighting to guarantee public funding policies aimed at rural women, social programs and rights²⁰. However, as we can see from the women's accounts, the recognition and conquest of their rights is under threat within their own homes. The unequal relationship between men and women within the marital relationship, anchored in patriarchy and capitalism, places the figure of the husband as the “boss” who appropriates production, the workforce, and controls female autonomy and sexuality²¹.

This female place in the activities, as it appears in the interviews, starts from childhood. Girls collaborate from an early age in domestic activities alongside their mothers, as do their brothers in agricultural work with their fathers²². In this way, as each member of the family grows up, they take on responsibility for the work they have learned. This apprenticeship will later have repercussions in the privileging of male children in the transmission of the land, on the grounds that they “understand” agricultural work. This contributes to daughters migrating to the cities in search of work. Even though there is legal recognition that all children, regardless of gender, are entitled to inheritance, these internal arrangements take place. For example, the father passing the land on to his sons, or the daughters selling their share to their brothers, because there is also a lack of interest on the part of women in taking over the land, a lack of interest previously motivated by women’s lack of involvement in agricultural work and management^{5,23}.

The interviewees emphasized the economic issue, as well as the fact that they didn’t have their own money and couldn’t make their own choices. It was clear that women were under the “tutelage” of their partners, in a process of infantilization that denied them the possibility of choosing their own clothes. This “infantilization” is historical and was supported for many years by laws that placed women under male control³. In Brazil, for example, the Civil Code of 1916 gave women the status of relative civil incapacity, restricting them from fully exercising their rights. The management of their assets was vested in the husband, and the celebration of marriage depended on the authorization of male figures in the family, such as the father or brothers²⁴. Although this legislation has been formally repealed, its marks persist in the social imaginary and in relational dynamics, especially those that reaffirm male centrality and the maintenance of asymmetrical power relations.

In this sense, the interviewees’ speeches revealed a feeling of loneliness, as well as the humiliation of having to ask for money or wait for their partner’s goodwill to provide them with the basics, such as clothes and food. The interviewees mentioned “being alone” to manage their work without ever having taken part in any decisions and having to go to a bank for the first time; to think of solutions for economic autonomy for their lives and having to work from “Sunday to Sunday” to make ends meet; to fight for their own health amidst their partner’s abandonment of their affection and care, thus perpetuating the structural inequalities that have historically persisted in rural areas²⁵. This imposed loneliness meant that it took the interviewees longer to organize themselves, break away from the violent relationship, and conquer their space and autonomy. We can see how symbolic violence, i.e. this mechanism of domination that is naturalized in social relations, especially gender relations, operated effectively and invisibly in the lives of these women. This symbolic violence is not restricted to explicit acts of physical aggression, but is inscribed in cultural norms, discourses, and everyday practices that legitimize and reproduce gender inequality. In this context, women tend to be excluded from spaces of social and political participation, and their autonomy is compromised as a historical and political subject²⁶. Thus, “*the subordination of reproductive work to productive work is linked to relations of gender domination, which symbolically and materially subordinate women and their associated activities, areas, and dimensions of social life and personal time*” (p. 50)²⁷.

We should also add domestic violence, which, according to Federici²⁸, is an essential part of controlling and maintaining women’s work. For Federici²⁸, capitalism gives men control and discipline over women’s work, in other words, they determine whether the work is well done and sufficient. Moreover, they rely on social tolerance, which still exists, to “discipline” their subordinates, wife and children, in a process of silencing this violence. In this way, the partner keeps the woman under threat and socially isolated, generating labor power and capital for himself. When one of the women interviewed tells her partner that she doesn’t feel well and hears that the pain she feels is “lack of work”, she is portraying immeasurable violence, which delegitimizes her pain and also accuses her of not wanting to work. It’s essential to realize that in the whole dynamic of domination, no matter how much women work, they can never complain, because, after all, “it’s the man who brings home the money”. Capital legitimizes male authority. Furthermore, the mechanism of “blame shifting” is widely used to hold women responsible for conflicts, such as “not going through their partner’s wallet”, living in a climate of continuous tension²⁹.

In this context of violence, work overload, and rurality, women’s physical and mental health is directly affected, which is a reality experienced by women in rural areas in different countries³⁰. For Molina³¹, intersectionality, gender, and feminism are central analytical bases for understanding the inequalities that affect rural women’s health, work, and lifestyles. In this sense, patriarchy and capitalism operate as structures that produce and deepen damage to these women’s health. It is not just a question of identifying and medicating women in psychological or

physical distress from a biomedical perspective, but of understanding the structural, work-related, and contextual factors that produce this illness.

Conclusion

This study has highlighted the intersections between violence and work in the daily lives of women living in rural areas. The dimensions of gender, combined with domestic and care activities and agricultural work, are deeply intertwined, resulting in these women being overburdened and exploited by their own partners who act as “bosses” of rural labor. In this scenario, domestic and symbolic violence operate as structuring mechanisms, functioning as a “knot” that articulates and sustains these unequal relationships, contributing to the maintenance of female subjugation within patriarchal and capitalist logics. Moreover, violence and work overload have negative repercussions on the physical, emotional, and reproductive health of these women, aggravated by the precariousness of rural work, abusive relationships with their partners, and difficulties in accessing health services. In view of this, it is essential to strengthen public policies aimed at women who live and work in rural areas, considering their specificities and needs, to promote economic autonomy and, in addition to generating income, increase their ability to make choices, value their work, and strengthen their self-esteem.

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