SUBJECTIVITY MANIPULATION DISPOSITIVE IN THE DAILY LIVES OF FEMALE EXECUTIVES

Dispositivos de Manipulação da Subjetividade no Cotidiano das Mulheres Executivas

Dispositivos para Manipular la Subjetividad en la Vida Diaria de las Mujeres Ejecutivas

Dispositivos de Manipulación de la Subjetividad en el Cotidiano de las Mujeres Ejecutivas

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Abstract

The rapid changes that take place in the world of work impact the way individuals live and work. In this context, strategies and manipulations are used to limit the female executives' way of working and living and appropriate them through seduction, justification, sophistication, and subtlety. Considering the lives of female executives inserted in modern society, the device appears to capture, model, and control their behavior and discourses. Therefore, this study analyzes the dispositive for manipulating women executives in business work. Descriptive and qualitative research was carried out based on a semi-structured script with 30 female executives in the decision-maker position. For data analysis, the content analysis technique was used with the aid of the Maxqda software. The results show how female executives are involved by the individual, social, organizational, and supportive devices that control and support their position. We conclude that the dispositive normalizes the female executives, leading them to fit into standard profiles according to their hierarchical function.

Keywords: female executives; device: subjectivity; management; woman.

Resumo

As rápidas mudanças que acontecem no mundo do trabalho impactam a forma de viver e trabalhar dos indivíduos. Nesse contexto, a gestão utiliza estratégias e manipulações que limitam os modos de trabalhar e viver das executivas e tenta delas se apropriar por meio de sedução, justificação, sofisticação e sutileza. Considerando os aspectos atuais da vida de executivas inseridas na sociedade moderna, os dispositivos surgem como forma de capturar, modelar e controlar as condutas e os discursos desses sujeitos. O objetivo do presente estudo é analisar quais são e como se expressam os dispositivos de manipulação de si no cotidiano de mulheres executivas. Assim, realizou-se uma pesquisa descritiva e qualitativa por meio de roteiro semiestruturado, com 30 executivas que estão em cargos que possuem poder de decisão. Para a análise de dados utilizou-se a técnica de análise de conteúdo com o auxílio do software Maxqda. Os resultados evidenciam que as executivas estão envolvidas por dispositivos individuais, sociais, organizacionais e de apoio, que controlam e sustentam sua posição. Conclui-se, então, que os dispositivos atuam na normalização das executivas, levando-as a se enquadrarem em perfis-padrão, de acordo com sua posição hierárquica.

Palavras-chave: executivas; dispositivos; subjetividade; gestão; mulher.

Resumen

Los rápidos cambios que ocurren en el mundo del trabajo impactan la manera de vivir y trabajar de los individuos. En este contexto, la gestión utiliza estrategias y manipulaciones que limitan los modos de trabajar y vivir de las executivas e intenta apropiarse de ellas por medio de seducción, justificación, sofisticación y sutileza. Considerando los aspectos actuales de la vida de ejecutivas introducidas en la sociedad moderna, los dispositivos surgen como forma de capturar, moldear y controlar las conductas y los discursos de estos sujetos. El objetivo del presente trabajo es analizar cuáles son y cómo se expresan los dispositivos de manipulación de uno en el cotidiano de mujeres ejecutivas. Así, se realizó una investigación descriptiva y cualitativa por medio de guión semiestructurado, con 30 ejecutivas que están en puestos que poseen poder de decisión. Para el análisis de datos se utilizó la técnica de análisis de contenido con la ayuda del software Maxqda. Los resultados evidencian que las ejecutivas están envueltas por dispositivos individuales, sociales, organizacionales y de apoyo, que controlan y sostienen su posición. Se concluye, entonces, que los dispositivos actúan en la normalización de las ejecutivas, llevándolas a que se encuadren en perfiles estándar, de acuerdo con su posición jerárquica.

Palabras clave: ejecutivas, dispositivos, subjetividad, gestión, mujer.

Résumé

Les changements rapides qui se produisent dans le monde du travail affectent la façon de vivre et de travailler des individus. Dans ce contexte, la gestion utilise des stratégies et des manipulations qui limitent les modes de travail et de vie des exécutives et essaye de s'en approprier au moyen de séduction, justification, sophistication et subtilité. Considérant les aspects actuels de la vie des exécutives insérées dans la société moderne, les dispositifs émergent comme un moyen de capturer, modéliser et contrôler les conduites et les discours de ces sujets. Le but de cette étude est d'analyser lesquels sont et comment s'expriment les dispositifs de manipulation dans le quotidien des femmes exécutives. Ainsi, s'est réalisée une recherche descriptive et qualitative au moyen d'un script semi-structuré, avec 30 exécutives qui occupent des postes avec pouvoir de décision. Pour l'analyse de données s'est utilisée la technique d'analyse de contenu avec l'aide du logiciel Maxqda. Les résultats mettent en évidence que les exécutives sont engagées par des dispositifs individuels, sociaux, organisationnels et de soutien, qui contrôlent et soutiennent sa position. Il est donc conclu que les dispositifs agissent dans la normalisation des exécutives, en les amenant à s'adapter à de profils standard, selon sa position hiérarchique.

Mots-clés : exécutives ; dispositifs ; subjectivité ; gestion ; femme.

Recent management modes contribute to shaping the ways of working and living of professionals (Grisci, 2008), who need to adapt creatively to them and respond profitably to social pressures. In the business context, management tries to appropriate the subjects, using strategies that control the ways of working through seduction, justification, sophistication, and subtlety (Gaulejac, 2007; Grisci, 2008).

The manipulation of subjectivity is carried out to control and exploit the subject, who begins to live as one's boss. He compares, controls, and demands himself. He examines the progress of his work tasks and presses for results, as it is necessary to make it productive and profitable. The subject molds himself to meet the demands imposed and leads him to invert priorities as if society puts itself at the service of the economy (Gaulejac, 2007).

This control takes place through devices, which act in the production of social spaces and subjectivities, shaping and directing the actions and thoughts of individuals in favor of the rationalization of production (Alves, 2008; Costa & Leão, 2017). The devices are related to a way of strategically positioning subjects and equipment to produce specific forms of knowledge that "subsidize institutional programs, rules of conduct and the various normalization procedures" (Mansano, 2009, p. 18).

Management devices may vary according to the demands of the positions, as well as act in different ways (Gomes et al., 2008). High hierarchical posts are conducive to highlighting the performance of these devices as they are more socially exposed and related to the company's visibility. There is a predominance of men as occupants of these positions (Fraga et al., 2021; Instituto Ethos, 2018; Tanure et al., 2007). Only 11% of the board positions of the 500 largest companies in Brazil are held by women, and in executive positions, they occupy 13.6% of the posts (Instituto Ethos, 2018).

Some companies took initiatives to increase the number of female executives, but most had no success with the results (Bibi, 2016; Dawson et al., 2015; Shortland & Perkins, 2020). There is a predominance of organizational practices that reinforce both gender differences and male dominance (Fraga & Rocha-de-Oliveira, 2020; Joshi et al., 2015). It often means that even female executives do not recognize the existing difficulties and the prejudice expressed concerning gender (Carvalho et al., 2010; Hryniewicz & Vianna, 2018; Mota-Santos et al., 2014).

In addition to patriarchal norms, which shaped women as responsible for household chores (Fraga & Rocha-de-Oliveira, 2020), prejudices, stereotypes, and harassment add to the labyrinths in the professional trajectory of women (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Fraga et al., 2021; Fraga & Rocha-de-Oliveira, 2020) and the incidence of the "glass ceiling" phenomenon (Mota-Santos et al., 2014). Women legitimize their executive positions through complete performance in their work, following well-institutionalized career progression paths. However, they need to articulate a potent strategic vision so, they can capture supporters for their ideas and leadership (Bowles, 2012).

Thus, as the greatest self-effort of work, managing one own image is dictated by pre-established standards (Brett & Stroh, 2003; Grisci et al., 2015). Physical beauty is considered a qualifier of visibility and the absence of physical beauty a qualifier of invisibility, both of which are established in the bodies of female executives. In the executive world, they need to be impeccable, make-up, well dressed, with nails done, go on diet, do gymnastics to maintain weight, and even undergo plastic surgery to meet the acceptable aesthetic standards, considering the assumption that they must always be more to compete with executive men (Grisci et al., 2015).

Faced with the social conception of man as an ideal worker (Eccel & Grisci, 2011; Fraga et al., 2020) and the frequent occurrence of the mansplaining and manterrupting phenomenon (Fraga et al., 2021; Jane, 2017; Solnit, 2017), it is understood that women need to reaffirm constantly themselves social and organizationally. Women, therefore, submit to the devices that manipulate them, corresponding to a desirable and acceptable standard, developing possibilities for career advancement or permanence (Grisci et al., 2015; Pagès et al., 2006). In this context, the question is: which and how are self-manipulation devices expressed in female executives?

In order to support the study, a search was carried out in journals on the Sucupira Platform, covering 1,250 journals from 2008 to 2018. When the terms female executives and device were combined, no indication was detected, suggesting that the literature does not have the terms female executives and device linked together (Olbermann, 2017). We then searched these terms together to find studies that investigated such devices in female executives, as well as to list the devices that act in their control.

Regarding the terms searched separately, 104 articles were listed And, after a cursory reading, it was found that 21 articles were related to the proposed themes. Of these, seven used the terms female executive and/or female executives, and 14 used the terms device and/or devices. The articles on female executives dealt with careers, gender, employability, and prejudice. The articles on devices, on the other hand, addressed organizational practices, gender, organizational control, power, temporality, and career.

A survey was also carried out in the international Scopus database, which resulted in a total of 195 articles. The search using the combination of terms did not detect any indication, suggesting that the international literature also does not have the terms female executive and device linked, in line with the Brazilian scenario (Olbermann, 2017). For the other terms surveyed, the results show the prevalence of studies on gender differences, salary disparity, "glass ceiling", performance, and retirement. Thus, considering this gap in the literature, this research proposes to identify which are and how the self-manipulation devices are expressed in the daily lives of female executives.

Management in Modernity: Control Devices in Female Executives

In the 20th century, modernity is characterized by the liquid modernity of life and society, which have constantly reinvigorated (Bauman, 2007a). In this scenario, individual desires soon become obsolete, and the subjects' conditions of action and reaction are often not even effective due to rapid transformations (Bauman, 2007b). In the organization, the flexibility and intensification of new work cycles, more fragmented and individualized, lead to the diversity of working times, which, increasingly, present themselves in asynchrony with social times, such as rest, leisure, education, and dedication to the family (Cardoso, 2013). This asynchrony makes time global, making it almost impossible to distinguish between leisure/family time and productive time (Tanure et al., 2007).

Concerning female executives, modernity has brought them evolution – especially for white and heterosexual women who are socially privileged (Fraga & Rocha-de-Oliveira, 2020) – through the rupture of traditional ways of organizing social life. However, hierarchical relationships between genders persist, with men assuming more dominant and socially valued positions. As a result, management takes advantage of the availability of female executives who struggle to achieve more space and positions of greater prestige, glamour, and status.

In this context, the manipulation of subjectivity is used by management to shape female executives to the imposed working conditions (Mansano, 2009). The principal interest is to use the subjectivity of female executives to meet the company's interests (Bernardo, 2009), perceiving the identity classification of female executives as a way of manipulating subjectivity by reproducing values and discourses manifested in power relations (Souza & Carrieri, 2010).

What is expected of the female executive is a previously defined performance, standardized by the attributions of responsibilities and tasks, in which she constantly needs to prove her suitability for what is required from her (Bernardo, 2009;

Pizza. 1995). The manipulation of the subjectivity of the subjects also occurs in the participation in programs of functional training, which aim at the integration of groups, cooperation, and the credibility of information, so that they can improve their performance to the point of guaranteeing the prestige of the executive position and the survival in the company (Pizza. 1995).

The production of the subjectivity of individuals is essentially modeled, fabricated, and unconscious; however, it can change society with the establishment of devices, (Guattari & Rolnik, 1996). According to Deleuze (1990), a device is a set of tangled lines, subject to variations in direction and intensity, without defined contours, but which have relations with each other through three axes: knowledge (production of knowledge), power (through which is possible to determine relationships and strategic dispositions), and subjectivity (production of subjects). These are lines that can be transformed at any time, always strained by demands, subjects, and the forces of exercise relationships (Deleuze, 1990). In this sense, the devices have a certain fluidity, not being, therefore, static.

The manipulation of subjectivity occurs through devices that can shape and direct both individuals' actions and thoughts (Mansano, 2007) in favor of management. It is understood that devices are related to "anything that somehow can capture, guide, determine, intercept, model, control and ensure the gestures, conduct, opinions and speeches of living beings" (Agamben, 2009, p. 12). For Agamben (2009, p. 42), "today there would not be a single moment in the lives of individuals that are not modeled, contaminated or controlled by a device", emphasizing that devices intervene in the lives of subjects at all times, in all the spheres: individual, social, organizational.

Organizational or management devices are understood to be a set of practices, speeches, tools, or even people aimed at the control at work. They work as elements that form behaviors and establish norms and values that guide the subjects' actions (Lauda, 2013). The devices are continuously created, enabling control over the executives through rules of social conduct and normalizing procedures (Mansano, 2007).

According to the rhizome principle, control is not exercised by reproduction and hierarchy but by variation and flow (Grisci, 2008) and decentralization (Mansano, 2009). The devices become evident in many ways, both in life and in individuals, reaching female executives from all sides – company, family, society – and by themselves, who are always their prisoners. Consequently, female executives depend on variables beyond their control to achieve personal advancement (Gaulejac, 2007).

The management performance on the mobilization of ways of working and living can be perceived in the executives, who adapt to the requirements to which they are submitted and to the characteristics of the position or specific functions in the organization (Pizza. 1995). Executives associate personal involvement and intrinsic motivation with the desire and pleasure of working and not with a system of punishments and rewards dictated by the company (Lauda, 2013).

Management "seduces" executives in such a way that they do not realize they are being controlled, as control is exercised subtly and mildly (Grisci, 2008). Availability to work, flexibility to travel at any time, and accepting the proposed challenges are attitudes demanded of executives and valued and awarded by the company (López-Ruiz, 2004). Affective and spatial mobility is required from the executive to maintain his career (Oltramari & Grisci, 2014). Thus, each employee needs to prove his competence to justify the position he holds, he must always go beyond the objectives determined by the company, as he is subject to coercive actions (Gaulejac, 2007).

The executive is in a constant evaluation process, the results of which can define both career progression and leaving the company (Bernardo, 2009; Mansano, 2009). To ensure survival in the organization, female executives need to believe in the dictated organizational proposals, as well as disseminate them, subordinating personal interests, socializing with other people, time, and feelings to production objectives (Pizza. 1995).

Methodological Procedures

The research has a descriptive and qualitative approach, which made it possible to understand the phenomenon studied from the perspective of female executives. In the present study, female executives are those who assume the role of president, vice-president, or director of the company (Lima et al., 2012). Consistent with the concept of Lima et al. (2012), those positioned at the third level were included, that is, those occupying positions below those of vice president and director but who have decision-making power. This delimitation was necessary since the term executive is constantly used to refer to other management positions.

As the literature considers both women who work in their own company (entrepreneurs) and those who work in a third-party company (employees) as executives, both categories were analyzed, as they share meanings related to the lives of female executives. Due to the various prejudices, stereotypes and harassment manifested in the professional trajectory of women (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Fraga et al., 2021; Fraga & Rocha-de-Oliveira, 2020), it is understood that they constantly need social and organizational reaffirmation. And, even if the woman acts as an employer, to keep her business competitive, she submits herself to pressure from different aspects and actors.

The data collection instrument consisted of a semi-structured script built on the theoretical framework (Table 1). The instrument underwent a pre-test with three female executives. The pre-test interviews had an average duration of one hour, which made it possible to estimate the time to be demanded from the female executives in the data collection interviews in the survey. According to the pre-test, the instrument proved to be rich, providing the opportunity for the emergence of different devices. Two questions were detected to be rewritten for not bringing contributions to the study.

Table 1
Interview script based on the theoretical framework

Working time		Guiding questions	Authors/Year
Female executives profile	Personal information	Q1	
	Work trajectory	Q9	
Female executives	Executive Function	Q2, Q4, Q5 e Q8	Bauman (2007a), Bauman (2007b), Gaulejac (2007), Pizza (1995), Pagès et al. (2006), Tanure et al. (2007) and Tonon & Grisci (2015).
	Society's perception	Q3	
	Behavior	Q7	
	Description of the executive routine	Q10, Q11, Q12, Q13 e Q14	
	Work and family	Q15	
	Female executives versus Executive men	Q16	
	Pleasures/Sufferings	Q6 e Q24	
Work	Working time	Q17	Agamben (2009), Bernardo (2009), Deleuze (1999), Grisci (2008), Guattari and Rolnik (1996), Mansano (2007, 2009) and Souza & Carrieri (2010).
	Social networks	Q18	
	Performance	Q19	
	Rewards and punishments	Q20, Q21, Q22	
	Updates for work	Q23	
	Keep in charge	Q24	
	Future goals	Q25	
	General	Q26 e Q27	

The initial contact with the female executives took place through the social network LinkedIn® and the researchers' personal friends, considering the visibility of the company, the interviewee, and highlighting the performance of the devices. Subsequently, the snowball technique was followed, and the participants were asked to indicate other people to contact until the field saturation point was reached. Thus, although the snowball technique tends to find subjects with the same profile, its adoption was considered necessary because when indicating other female executives, the participants already evidence devices that manipulate the female executives' subjectivity, such as lifestyle, clothing, business and social events, and the importance of the position performed. Since the number of female executives is lower than that of men (Instituto Ethos, 2018) and the difficulty of finding female executives willing to participate in the research, no exclusion criteria were used.

Data collection took place between July and October 2019. Three interviews took place in person, and 27 were carried out online, as many participants were far from where the researchers were. It is noteworthy that online conversations allowed more people to participate in the research, as the internet brings people together and provides the opportunity to talk to female executives who otherwise would be inaccessible (Stewart & Shamdasani, 2017).

The interviewees have different profiles. Their ages range from 31 to 63 years; 22 work in national companies and eight in multinationals; 12 in their own company; one holds public office. Of the interviewees, 23 are married; three are single; two are separated, and two are divorced. And the average income of female executives is R$30,000.00. It should be noted that not all participants reported their age and income.

In the initial contact, the purpose of the research was explained, and a date for the interview was scheduled. Initially, it was announced that the meeting would be recorded, guaranteeing anonymity and the scientific use of the information through a consent form. After the participant's consent, the dialogue began. The total duration of the conversations was 31 hours and 18 minutes, with an average of one hour and four minutes for each interview. The interviews were transcribed for the analysis, resulting in 659 pages.

The speeches were analyzed using the content analysis technique (Bardin, 2016) and organized into preliminary categories based on the study's keywords. Through this process, four final categories were obtained organizational, social, individual, and support devices. The Max-Qda software was used to organize and restructure the categories, as it allows better visualization of the data. However, researchers remain the principal interpreters and organizers of the categories even with the adoption of software (Milford et al., 2017).

Analysis of Results

Devices are presented in four perspectives: individual, social, organizational, and support. Although this organization of devices differs from the rhizomatic theory (Deleuze, 1990) - which approaches the device without defined contours - and from the studies of management devices - which analyze them in the organizational scope -, they were analyzed from these perspectives to be evidenced the performance and strength of other everyday spheres on the subject. This analysis shows that the devices used by management to manipulate the subjectivity of individuals, at some point, (re)find and branch out - as the rhizome presupposes - with the action of social, individual, and support forces.

Individual Devices: Boosters for Executive Careers

To present the individual devices, we considered those that management shows as drivers of executive careers, which are associated with intrinsic aspects of life and represent the necessary impulse for women to pursue their executive careers. The individual devices found were: ambition, power, self-criticism, updating, self-realization, achievements, challenges, initiative, and creativity.

According to the interviewees, there is no limit to their ambition, to the growth of the ego, or to the refusal to accept their limits (Bauman, 2007a) – "in addition to feeling that I could do more, I wanted more and knew that I lived there in the business that I could be prosperous, I could be, do much more, which depended on my effort" (E20, 62 years old, businesswoman). Therefore, the subjectivity of female executives is manipulated to meet the interests of management (Bernardo, 2009; Mansano, 2009) and to encourage the development of ambitious and rational characteristics, aiming at career advancement (Cyrino, 2011).

The need for ambition being established in the subject, the power inherent to executive positions arises because people "do not empower themselves as human beings, they empower themselves with the position" (E21, 52 years old, businesswoman). The decision-making power linked to the position raises the female executive's ego since "most people I talk to, the position comes before the human being, and when I speak with the position, I speak with the ego, I speak with power" (E21, 52 years old, businesswoman). The female executive lets herself be carried away by the power and the ego when the position becomes bigger than the person, generating a greater sense of omnipotence (Tanure et al., 2007).

Due to the demands and pressures of the position to which they are subjected, the female executives believe that self-criticism is necessary for their development: "*I think I'm the most incompetent person on the face of the earth, all the time. But, I think that's good because you always try to improve. You have to be self-critical all the time*" (E1, 51 years, director). The devices manipulate subjectivity so that formal control is no longer necessary (Mansano, 2009), as the female executives themselves take care of it and start to live like their own bosses (Gaulejac, 2007).

The fear of being replaced (Olbermann et al., 2017; Tanure et al., 2007) and of becoming outdated (Bauman, 2007b) makes female executives seek incessantly to improve their performance. Female executives cannot "stand still", as stagnation is not allowed in modernity (Bauman, 2007b; Mansano, 2009). They must constantly update themselves and this, contrary to what many imagine, *"it is not easy. Isn't it 'oh you go there, put on your heels 15, put on your pencil skirt and everything's ok'? It's not that! We have to study, we have to keep up to date"* (E13, 39 years old, manager). Updates are devices that improve the performance of female executives to guarantee them the prestige of the position and survival in the company (Pizza. 1995).

The desire to fulfill themselves in their careers and the dream of building an enviable future are characteristic features of the discourse on the lives of female executives (López-Ruiz, 2004). Self-fulfillment and the pleasure of achievement are praised by them: "*I think there is a thing of looking back and realizing that you conquered what you thought you were not capable of*" (E2, 49 years old, director). Self-realization emerges as a reward from executive life. There is no room to question individual efforts compared to the benefits of executive life. Suffering, sadness, and frustration do not match this lifestyle.

Self-realization comes along with the search for challenges: "*I like the challenge! You learn*" (E1, 51 years old, director). They challenge themselves all the time, aiming to create an identity and recognition for what they do and for the quality of their work (Dejours, 1999): "*people who know me know me for my genius and my personality. What concept do I have? Of a woman who does it! If I make a commitment, I deliver and it's over*" (E21, 52 years old, businesswoman). The challenge emerges as a way to remain competitive and justify its place in the labor market.

As a result of organizational competition, initiative and creativity are crucial factors for achieving the desired results, being attributes inherent to successful executives (Alencar, 2011). The speech of E29 (44 years old, director) shows how female executives perceive creativity as something natural when, in fact, it is an adaptation to the constant changes imposed by management: "I liked to learn, to share, and that made me have a broader look, which ended up favoring me because every time I had a new project, I was always asked to take it on. So, with that, I built in a very natural way this position of always leading the projects, the people".

The individual devices show how the female executives adhere to the management discourse as if they were natural to their personality. Although such characteristics, desires, feelings, and abilities are not inherent to them, they are developed and highlighted as a way to keep in the position and be competitive in the market.

Social Devices: Adaptation to the Glamour of the Position

To analyze the social devices, adaptations to social norms were taken as a basis for female executives to remain in a position of visibility, status, and glamour, acting as existential standards. Social devices were considered: glamour, status, social projects, social visibility, clothing, overcrowded agenda, robustness, and "opening doors".

When occupying a high position in the organizational hierarchy, the executive is seen by society as someone who has reached the desired position, receives enviable remuneration, enjoys various benefits (Tanure et al., 2007), and, therefore, is successful. These elements describe the subject making an identity reference and defining his status concerning others (Mansano, 2009): "*the status is quite good. The responsibility is great, but the status is very seductive*" (E5, 55 years old, director). Gradually, female executives produce lifestyles resulting from social elements marked by glamour, status, and social prestige (Tonon & Grisci, 2015), because "*people have a vision, in my perception, that executives are demigods*" (E8, 33 years old, manager).

The performance of unpaid and "volunteer" work stood out in the interviewees' reports. These jobs become part of the female executives' work routine and provide them with more visibility, glamour, and status and, consequently, more credibility to sustain their business: "*I'm giving a little more time to do this too, it brings a very nice result for the company*" (E20, 62 years old, businesswoman). It is convenient to develop social actions, but exercising a hierarchical position with status: "*I am also vice president of an association. It is also another bias using my manager's head, but for this to be reversed in actions and benefit people*" (E18, 44 years old, businesswoman).

To be identified as female executives, women need to develop actions that give them social visibility compatible with this role: "*when you are recognized for doing something that is difficult to contest, but that the community understands as positive, that you are applauded, that you are recognized this is also very important*" (E16, 37 years old, public office). Developing actions corresponding to society's expectations means submitting to certain norms that enable them to be socially recognized (Cyrino, 2011).

As a producer of social space (Costa & Leão, 2017), the glamour device makes society relate the executive position to people who are well dressed, have expensive cars and enormous houses or apartments; who travel all over the world, stay in luxurious hotels; who attend restricted clubs and restaurants (Pizza. 1995). To meet society's expectations regarding the executive stereotype, they adapt to the ways of working (Grisci, 2008), even when these behaviors do not match their lifestyle, as reported by E25 (63 years old, businesswoman):

> I think there is a big concern to convey through clothing and behavior how I want to be read by society. I want to be understood as a tough leader; the clothes are more classic, the behavior is tougher, and the language is tougher. I want to be read as a sweetheart, the clothes are a little more colorful, the language a little looser, and there are more smiles on the lips. So, the female executive ends up carrying that into the general behavior of how she wants to be read, and then there's some suffering because the female executive sometimes wants to deliver, she wants to be austere, but at the same time, she wants to be liked. And then there's a crossfire.

There is a social demand that uses mobilization tools such as the dynamics of the "ideal self": either the individual conquers or is subjected to anguish and emptiness (Gaulejac, 2007) – "*this for me I know it's a representation, and I have a suffering because I can't be who I am, you know? So, there is a stereotype there that we follow the booklet*" (E9, 45 years old, manager). The interviewees show that they feel trapped by a standard model, such as a predefined identity of a glamourized figure that enhances their power (Rolnik, 1997).

Through clothing, the female executives mythologize an image that attractively presents them in the hope of sustaining the recognition of society (Rolnik, 1997), as reported by E18 (44 years old, businesswoman): "*What bothers me a lot is society's demand to transform you into a model that doesn't necessarily have to be. That is, it's the one you have to pretend*

you are because that's what society wants you to be". Her subjectivity is therefore shaped and controlled by the dictates of society, as she is constantly being monitored and judged.

The role of a successful female executive is also demonstrated by an always full and super crowded schedule. Meetings and more meetings happen daily: "*yesterday, for example, I had seven meetings*" (E6, 55 years old, director). Engaging in the various organizational commitments provide the feeling of being indispensable, and the visibility of their numerous commitments refers to the figure of a competent professional (Tanure et al., 2007).

The figure of female executives is reinforced by the media with the image of a strong, powerful and intelligent character (Olbermann, 2017), which they reproduce: "*it's not our profile to depend on anyone and we all walk the road without depending on anyone. So, don't come if you don't have it. There is no bibelot here*" (E3, 44 years old, director). Because characteristics that refer to femininity - emotionality and sensitivity - are not desired in management and, when assuming higher positions in the hierarchy, women tend to exalt characteristics - strong and independent - socially attributed to the profile of the ideal worker - masculine - to be accepted as a leader (Eccel & Grisci, 2011; Fraga et al., 2020).

Often, the place of women in the organization is questioned, either because of their domestic duties or because of their characteristics: "*I think that this issue of pregnancy, the leave that the woman takes and the child is also very disturbing*" (E24, 43 years old, businesswoman). Due to the predominance of organizational practices that reinforce gender differences and male dominance (Fraga & Rocha-de-Oliveira, 2020; Joshi et al., 2015), many of the reports presented could have been made by men since the women assume an executive pattern dictated by management: "*after you beat men neck and neck, you have to forget about a son's school meeting, you have to forget about the day you have menstrual cramps, you don't even have time for maternity leave, so you have to work as a man*" (E1, 51 years old, director).

The executive position provides access to people and places previously inaccessible to women. As the insertion of women into positions of power is gradual, still preferably occupied by men (Tanure et al., 2007), they recognize the importance of the path taken and the "opening of doors", as E17 (41 years old, coordinator) reports: "*it took us a long time to get to these places, so I see that society doesn't really understand what it is, but they value women when they arrive at this place. I realize you have an admiration*". The "opening of doors" is one of the devices that shape the executive subjectivity, making her accept the conditions of the position held.

Organizational Devices: Seduction and Reward

Organizational devices act in the subjectivation of female executives to adapt to the requirements imposed by the position, which turns them into depersonalized agents (Pizza. 1995). The following were considered organizational devices: identity classification, seduction - financial and psychological rewards, identification and involvement, owner positioning, mobility, competitiveness, performance evaluation with a focus on results, the promise of independence, freedom, and synoptic surveillance.

It is relevant for the organization that the female executive considers herself distinct from others; she does things differently and has a prominent place: "*they say I was one of the 50 most influential CEOs in this Hispanic community*" (E2, 49 years old, director). The female executive feels as if she were unique as if that place could be occupied only by her, creating an identity classification (Souza & Carrieri, 2010). It is as if she occupies one of the highest places on the podium, and other people have nothing left but admiration and a desire to be equal.

To differentiate and reinforce the position of female executives, companies seduce them through financial and psychological rewards. Thus, in addition to prominence before others for having decision-making power and managing the work of others, the financial benefits accentuate the differences, reinforcing their status and distancing them from other employees. In this scenario, the devices establish themselves in the form of seduction: "*I have a health plan that covers me and my family, top! I have a private pension, I have a good car, I have an Audi Q3 that the company changes every two years, notebook, cell phone*" (E1, 51 years old, director). However, all the time, female executives justify themselves by surrendering to the seduction of the rewards offered (Brett & Stroh, 2003): "*when you are an executive, you earn more, and the financial part you can enjoy later with your family and everything else, of course*" (E4, 51 years old, director). Here are the devices acting, manipulating, and seducing the executives (Grisci, 2008).

Due to the subtlety with which the devices work in the executives' lives, they are not aware of the manipulation, such as, for example, the computer that is offered by the company and seems to be received as a gift and not as a work tool that will enhance the results (Bernardo, 2009): "*last year I was given the last generation notebook from Apple, so monstrous the computer and I was super happy*" (E12, manager). Female executives are seduced by admiration (Sennett, 2009); therefore, psychological rewards also sustain the executive life: "*we had a meeting with the whole group from Mexico, Austria and I already had an increase in recognition for the work, dedication, it was really cool*" (E14, 43 years old, manager).

The identification of personal values with the organizational values leads female executives to feel strongly involved with the company (Coda & Fonseca, 2004; França, 2009). The involvement is perceived by the report of E3 (44 years old, director): "*I say to my husband: 'I married Company C before you because I married Company C in 93 and you in 95'*".

Involvement with work is seen as an intrinsic motivation for the pleasure of working and not as a device of punishments and rewards dictated by the company (Lauda, 2013) to induce greater commitment to the career (França, 2009). This involvement awakens a sense of belonging and makes female executives see their definition at work (França, 2009): "*I love what I do, I love the company I work for, and I can't see myself out of there*" (E3, 44 years old, director).

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The organizational strategies used to seduce the executives, making them feel like members of a family, a situation in which the individual identity mixes with the company identity, assuming their personality (Bernardo, 2009; Pagès et al., 2006). Executives are required to put themselves in the role of owners because, in this way, there will be a greater approximation between the organizational purposes and those of the executive, as E7 (49 years old, director) reports: "it is as if, for me, work was my business. My business today is Nacional 7, I provide services for them. Because I understand it as my business." It is understood, then, that the executive must act and think like an owner, as the company has an ideal that is shared so that it can feed it (Gaulejac, 2007).

Mobility has been an imperative for career development (Fraga & Rocha-de-Oliveira, 2020). Executives have to be available to travel for work (López-Ruiz, 2004) as a way of investing in their careers: "I was always very available to travel, I was very available to effectively invest in it" (E6, 55 years old, director). Travel makes them feel relevant and indispensable, so they are available and mix work and leisure time (Cardoso, 2013; França, 2009; Gaulejac, 2007; Oltramari & Grisci, 2014; Tanure et al., 2007).

By adhering to the management discourse, executives seek justifications and ways to conciliate organizational demands: "*Multinational 6's headquarters are in Atlanta. I'm going to Atlanta, and then I'm going to go to New York for a few days*" (E6, 55 years old, director). Thus, the work of female executives occupies full time, and leisure time becomes fragmented (Bauman, 2007a; Cardoso, 2013; Tanure et al., 2007): "*I quit the gym and I miss it so much. So, it's me having spaces that I can't have today*" (E25, 63 years old, businesswoman).

Organizations put female executives to the test all the time. Often, their limits, ability to work, and performance are pushed to the extreme point in the aggressive competition, in which the weakest is eliminated (Dejours, 2007). The testimony of E12 (manager) illustrates this context: "*the commercial that was my partner, it's a very aggressive, competitive area, but it's not a healthy competition, it's a destructive competitive and I couldn't get into that vibe*". It is noticed that the strong performance control of the Taylorist model gives way to devices that act subtly. The boss doesn't need to charge for results: employees are strategically arranged as a way to improve the performance of others without constant surveillance.

Female executives are recognized for what they do and not for who they are (Dejours, 1999) because "*what matters is the result. It's the result that always brings in*" (E14, 43 years old, manager). Control over female executives is also exercised by setting production and profit targets (Sennett, 2015): "*goals that are not my day-to-day, are goals beyond my day-to-day. So, in addition to my daily dedication, I have projects that I coordinate and so. And I am evaluated yes, and of course, the result is clear*" (E6, 55 years old, director).

In these circumstances, some conflicts emerge, as not everything that is imposed is following the values cherished by individuals. The female executive imagines that she has autonomy but is an autonomy granted to do what is imposed: "*what generates frustration, suffering, it is that I have to work many times against my authentic will, right, and have to operate in the naked logic of numbers*" (E8, 33 years old, manager). The devices can shape and guide the behavior of employees (Mansano, 2007), resulting in female executives abstaining from certain ethical principles as if the ends justified the means

(Dejours, 2007). The way of thinking and living of each one changes due to the overlapping of organizational interests over personal ones, as the subjectivity of the female executives must meet the interests of the company (Bernardo, 2009).

Thus, although the success and glamour associated with executive life produce a sense of freedom and autonomy (Pizza. 1995), a control over female executives subtly develops: "*you don't have time control, but you also work more than 12 hours a day. The volume of activity is too large*" (E1, 51 years old, director). They do not feel controlled, as the manipulation devices are associated with mobility and have synoptic characteristics (Grisci, 2008), as can be seen in the speech of E1 (51 years old, director): "*you don't have control, you don't have time to do anything anyway, so you have so much activity and I have a full schedule in shared Outlook. Everyone knows where I am all the time*". The female executive domination happens through devices that can be activated anywhere, at any time (Mansano, 2009). Due to technological innovations, the production of new modes of subjectivation turns to control, incorporating monitoring and surveillance (Mansano, 2009).

New technologies allow the executive to be subtly controlled from anywhere: "it was a great achievement for them to give it up and let me do this home office. It was an achievement I would never have thought of" (E7, 49 years old, director). The illusory freedom of being able to work from wherever she wants hides the control exercised over the female executive, as she must be permanently connected to the network (Gaulejac, 2007). The mechanisms used by management aim to improve organizational performance and enable managers to deal with workers to obtain higher advantages for the benefit of the organization without using explicit mechanisms of coercion (Homem et al., 2009).

Support Devices: Executive Position Maintainers

Female executives who occupy high positions in the hierarchy are seen as "super executives", who manage to conciliate different roles. And, to sustain the dynamics of executive life, they are supported by various devices, without which they would have greater difficulty reaching the desired position. Support devices, therefore, organize the executive's life, changing her lifestyle according to her professional life, with support from her work team, family members, outsourced staff, therapists, and coaches.

Thus, in the organizational environment, the female executive has a work team that is responsible for supporting the female executive: "*I am very happy to have good people working with me. In fact, this is a sine qua non condition for you to advance in your career*" (E4, 51 years old, director). This statement shows that the sense of organizational belonging is enhanced when the subject participates in a successful team (França, 2009; Tanure et al., 2007).

Women also rely on their families to support their executive roles. For the professional success and maintenance of status, they depend both on resignations and on a well-structured family that supports the female executive in maintaining her image as a competent subject (Oltramari et al., 2011). This situation ends up becoming natural for the female executive because "*everyone knows that I work a lot, that I have a lot of responsibility, so much that I can't keep in touch with them [family members] daily*" (E8, 33 years old, manager).

Gradually, the family organizes itself without the executive, and many decisions are taken without her participation (Dejours, 1999), as reported by E27 (61 years old, director): "*there was a driver who took them to the places they needed to go, to English class, to the dentist. I talked to people on the phone, I went from time to time for them to see my face, but I wasn't at all the appointments*". Since the devices shape subjectivity to adapt to modern life (Bauman, 2007b; Mansano, 2009), both her and the people around her have to adapt to the impositions of management.

To endure the difficult routine and maintain the position they have conquered, female executives have to forget about family demands – socially and culturally considered a woman's responsibility (Fraga & Rocha-de-Oliveira, 2020). In this circumstance, they rely on outsourced services – drivers, nannies, maids – to perform their multiple roles outside the organizational scope, as reported by E7 (49 years old, director): "*I hired a taxi service that takes her and picks her up in all these places, with a schedule. We can have that independence*". What E7 (49 years old, director) calls independence corresponds to the desire to feel free, not to face the obstacles of the labyrinth of the female professional trajectory (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Fraga et al., 2021; Fraga & Rocha-de-Oliveira, 2020) that would prevent her from continuing her work.

For female executives, the challenge is to fight for balance between all the spheres they go through (Tanure et al., 2007). As women are required to play the roles of mother, maid, wife, and daughter, it would not be possible for them to continue their careers if it were not for the support devices. However, the reality of these female executives, due to social privileges – white, heterosexual women, with a family income higher than the Brazilian average – allows the labyrinths of their careers (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Fraga et al., 2021; Fraga & Rocha-de-Oliveira, 2020) are less drastic when compared to the vast majority of Brazilian women.

To support the dynamics of the process, they also seek support in therapies, as E8 (33 years old, manager) explains: "*I did all kinds of possible therapies that you can imagine: psychoanalysis, cognitive, developmental program, immersions.*

Yoga is being my last tried line of therapy from this process". Unable to manage all the spheres that involve them alone, female executives use apparatus to be able to show themselves as unshakable and deserving of the position they occupy.

Then, it is clear that these devices can also be understood as a form of discipline: management encourages female executives to seek help as a way of controlling their behavior and standardizing it according to the behavior accepted by management. Thus, even after reaching the top, they continue the therapies, especially so that they can withstand the pressures of the position, as reported by E7 (49 years old, director): "*we need it, especially as I'm in a family business, extremely traditional, sexist. So, to ride the wave and it doesn't get too heavy*". Due to the high workload and burnout, as a result, female executives turn to support devices to minimize suffering and guilt.

Management organizes these devices so that everyone wants to be a successful executive and be the president of the company, even if there is only room for one president. Thus, in this continuous search, the subject accepts the conditions imposed in the search for better performances that directly benefit the modes of production. The quest to be the best does not privilege professional and personal fulfillment, but rather the profitability of the company. Even because those who get there, in addition to having abdicated their leisure, suffer from the resignations. And the continuous search for happiness becomes, therefore, a favorable space for the performance of management devices.

Final Considerations

The gradual insertion of women in the labor market, especially in higher hierarchical positions, is gaining more visibility and raises questions about the construction of the subjectivity of female executives in modernity. This construction occurs through continuously created devices, enabling control over individuals, creating rules of social conduct, and determining normalizing procedures (Mansano, 2007).

Both the social construction, which considers women responsible for household activities and for raising children (Fraga & Rocha-de-Oliveira, 2020), and harassment, discrimination, and stereotypes create a labyrinth in the female professional trajectory (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Fraga et al., 2021; Fraga & Rocha-de-Oliveira, 2020). This context perpetuates the salary disparity and the lower number of women in management positions; and to compete "equally" with men, they have to try harder than they do (Grisci et al., 2015); therefore, they submit themselves more intensely to the performance of the devices to demonstrate the merit of occupying a specific place in society, business, and family.

The research shows that individual devices are drivers of executive careers, such as ambition, power, self-criticism, updating, self-fulfillment, achievements, challenges, initiative, and creativity. Social devices were considered the influences of society, such as glamour, status, social projects, social visibility, clothing, busy schedule, robustness, and "opening doors". As organizational devices used in the manipulations of organizational management on individuals, the following were found: identity classification, seduction - financial and psychological rewards -, identification and involvement, owner positioning, mobility, competitiveness, performance evaluation with a focus on results, the promise of independence, freedom and synoptic surveillance. As support devices that support the female executives to remain in the occupied position, the following were found: work team, family, outsourced team, and therapists.

Studies on management devices focus on organizational analysis, which is the driving force shaping the subjectivity of subjects. The present study advances by registering four types of devices acting on the interviewees - individual, social, organizational, and support - which support the position of the female executives. Even though they are subject to management control, these devices act in other spheres of their daily lives - individual, social, and family arrangements - and as normalizers of their behaviors and lifestyles.

The rhizomatic perspective is opportune in exposing the (re)encounters and ramifications of the management device's performance used to manipulate the individuals' subjectivity, at different times and spheres of daily life. This perspective shows us that understanding the subject in the management of modern society, and in an isolated way does not contemplate the dynamics of power relations and the identity of subjects. In other words, more and more work and the individual intertwine, reinforce and constitute themselves, constantly impacting and shaping the subject's way of living and being.

Through seduction, justification, sophistication, and subtlety (Grisci, 2008), management works to engage employees (França, 2009). The devices emerge to shape the subjects to constitute their career as "their own business". The management discourse is supported by showing that the investment made – training, aesthetic presentation, development of competencies – is for itself and not the company, as contemporary careers presuppose. It is a way to transfer the personal development costs to the employee, but the company ends up benefiting from this investment. In this way, rethinking the discourses of contemporary careers and new forms of organization, in the light of rhizomatic theory and control devices, can bring other contributions to the area.

The present study acquires social relevance by exposing that people are subject to social and organizational standards in search of professional fulfillment and social status that is imposed by modern society. From this, it was shown that

"achievements" can be perceived through different lenses. Through one, one sees a life of glamour, power, status, money, and luxury; through another, the suffering, the barriers, the responsibilities, and the impositions inherent to the position are evidenced. The analyzed devices demonstrate, therefore, that those female executives are shaped by the dictates of the executive post that invade all spheres of their lives, resulting in a predefined and idealized way of living. (Rolnik, 1997).

This study, then, exposes how women go through the various curves that make up the labyrinth of their professional trajectory (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Fraga et al., 2021; Fraga & Rocha-de-Oliveira, 2020). Several reports reveal how female executives shape themselves to meet the social demands constructed concerning their role as women. Adaptation to the profile that privileges masculinities is a way to build a career and maintain their place in society and the organization. This behavior, however, does not lead to progress in the discussion about gender equality policies in organizations.

Therefore, it becomes urgent to discuss public and organizational policies that can equalize conditions between genders to obtain greater equality in the organizational environment; so that, in the reports of the female executives, the egalitarian division of household activities was not perceived, nor the inversion of social roles - men assuming domestic responsibilities. Thus, the predominance of organizational practices that reinforce gender differences (Fraga & Rocha-de-Oliveira, 2020; Joshi et al., 2015) allows us to understand why many companies are not successful in increasing the number of women in management positions (Bibi, 2016; Dawson et al., 2015; Shortland & Perkins, 2020). Policies in favor of the family and parenting prove to be opportune as a way for men to assume family responsibilities, reducing the workload of women's homes. In other words, investing in extended paternity leave helps to soften stereotypes that fall on women.

Finally, based on the limitations of the present research, it is pointed out that all the interviewees were white, heterosexual women and had family support; even those who reported having come from the lower class are currently in a different position from that occupied by most Brazilian women. It is suggested, therefore, to carry out investigations that consider social intersectionalities, such as income, gender, ethnicity, color, and nationality (Fraga et al., 2021; Fraga & Rocha-de-Oliveira, 2020). Furthermore, it would be equally interesting to analyze the action of the devices on occupants of positions with less organizational status; as well as analyze the changes that have taken place in society caused by the covid-19 pandemic, which may have led to the emergence of new devices, which signals a possibility for the achievement of future studies.

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