


NETWORK OF PROTECTION AND RECEPTION OF THE ELDERLY FROM THE HISTORICAL-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE: EXPERIENCE REPORT

 <https://doi.org/10.56238/rcsv15n2-007>

Submitted on: 01/14/2025

Approval date: 02/14/2025

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to discuss the role of the psychologist in the protection network for the elderly, based on an experience of a professional internship, supervised by a public security agency specialized in the protection of the elderly, as well as its articulation with the Social Assistance services, located in the state of Rio Grande do Norte (RN), from the historical-cultural perspective of aging. In the internship field, welcoming activities, consultations, home visits, and articulation with the Social Assistance network were developed through referrals. Thus, the internship provided a greater understanding of the functioning of the Unified Social Assistance System (SUAS), the importance of intersectoriality for the realization of social rights, through programs and benefits, for the protection and promotion of the rights of the elderly, as well as the importance of the ethical-political performance of the psychologist, as an enabler of rights and transformer of social reality.

Keywords: Public Security. Social assistance. Violence. Old.

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INTRODUCTION

This article aims to discuss the role of the psychologist in the protection network focused on the elderly, based on an experience of supervised professional internship in a public security agency specialized in the protection of the elderly and its articulation with the Social Assistance services, located in the state of Rio Grande do Norte (RN), from the historical-cultural perspective of aging, which was the theoretical line listed to support reflections and interventions in the field. This work consists of an experience report regarding the practices developed in the internship, as well as seeks to promote a critical reflection on the phenomenon of old age in contemporary society under the capitalist production model, and the role of the psychologist in the protection of the elderly.

However, it is necessary to conceptualize the theoretical contribution that underpinned this study: the Historical-Cultural theory, elaborated and developed by the Russian researcher Lev Semionovich Vygotsky (1896-1934). Vygotsky built this psychological approach based on the theoretical assumptions of historical-dialectical materialism postulated by the thinkers Karl Marx (1818-1883) and Friedrich Engels (1820-1895), to understand the formation of the human psyche (Souza & Silva, 2018).

Historical-cultural psychology understands man as an active, social, historical, and dialectical being, whose psychic development occurs from the insertion of man in the cultural plane, through social activity, which is fundamentally mediated by historically and socially constructed instruments and signs, endowed with cultural meanings (Facci, 2004; Clarindo, 2020).

Therefore, for Vygotsky, the genesis of typically human psychological processes, which he calls Higher Psychological Processes, originate and develop from the relationships established with the environment, which is historical, collective, and cultural, through the internalization of the instruments and signs present in a given reality, in a movement that is, first, interpsychic and, later, intrapsychic (Mouro, et al, 2016; Lima & Carvalho, 2013).

Given this, according to Vygotsky, the subject is not a being that is born with a ready-made and delimited essence, crystallized and defined by its organicity. It is constituted through the interrelations between the social and biological planes, establishing unique relationships with the environment, in a given historical and cultural context that configure meaning to their experiences (Siqueira, 2019).

Considering these assumptions, the Historical-Cultural theory goes against the mechanistic and mentalist currents that dominated the knowledge of psychology as a

science in its time, and which, in its view, did not answer the question of what is specifically human in man and how he develops; the first sought to explain psychological processes from a purely naturalistic perspective, since, in this way, they were subject to observation and measurement, and in that period, psychology intended to establish itself as a science under the experimental method; the second, excessively idealistic, based on transcendental and metaphysical assumptions, since he believed that properly human processes could not be objectively studied and explained, only described, through the mentalist method (Ferreira & Roldão, 2018)).

By considering the concrete condition of the subject, in its historical-social dimension, Vygotsky breaks with the positivist and idealist posture predominant in psychology, with its abstract and immediatist way of explaining psychic phenomena, and revolutionizes psychological thinking and doing, focusing on reality and the social relations that surround the subject and build his psyche, conceiving man as an active, social and historical being, in a dialectical process enabling a vision and a critical action of society (Ferreira & Roldão, 2018; Barros, Paula, Pascual, Colaço & Ximenes, 2009).

According to Vygotsky, meaning is fluid, dynamic, singular, dialectically constructed, and historically and culturally crossed, through language. Meaning, in turn, is stable and uniform, thus characterizing itself as one of the zones of meaning (Ferreira & Roldão, 2018). Based on such theoretical assumptions, it is intended here to understand aging in a contextualized and critical way, especially how Social Assistance in Brazil and public security are articulated in the process of protecting the elderly in a context of vulnerability and violation of rights.

AGING IN THE HISTORICAL-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

Due to the increase in life expectancy due to advances in the technological and health sectors, the Brazilian (and world) population is aging more and more (Statute of the Elderly, 2003).

Old age has occupied a paradoxical and contradictory place, with its conception varying according to culture and historical period, being associated with punishment and punishment, as well as wisdom (Bocatto & Franco, 2019). Traditionally, psychology has studied old age from a naturalizing and chronological perspective, emphasizing the biological and pathological aspects of aging, and ignoring the concrete historical-social determinants that characterize and constitute this stage of life (Reis & Facci, 2015; Bocatto & Franco, 2019).

According to Reis (2011), the construction of old age in the social imaginary is intrinsically linked to the economic and productive model in force in society. In a capitalist society, old age is related to a decrease in the workforce, unproductivity, disease, and loss, causing them to often remain on the margins of society, isolated and forgotten (Reis & Facci, 2016).

However, old age is a social construction, and its experience cannot be generalized, because each subject attributes to it meanings that make it unique, and provide unique possibilities of development, based on what he experiences with the external reality (Reis & Facci, 2015).

Thus, development, for Historical-Cultural Psychology, is a continuous and dialectical process, centered on the activity of the subject, who is historically situated (Reis & Facci, 2015). Therefore, it is necessary to think of old age as a stage in which development occurs, providing conditions for the development of the subject's potentialities, contributing to transform the hegemonic conception of old age in Western contemporaneity, which associates it with decadence and uselessness, because such construction favors the neglect and exclusion of this age group from society.

THE STATUTE OF THE ELDERLY, SOCIAL ASSISTANCE AND PROTECTION OF THE ELDERLY

Over the years, multiple legal prerogatives have been created and public policies have been implemented that have determined the social commitment of the State and society to the promotion of rights and social protection of the elderly (Silva & Yazbek, 2014).

The National Policy for the Elderly (1994) postulates in Article 1 "to ensure the social rights of the elderly, creating conditions to provide their autonomy, integration and effective participation in society" (Illi, 2010). In this way, the family, society, and the State have the social responsibility to build conditions for the elderly to fully exercise their rights, with the recognition of their rights and freedoms, aiming to realize their rights, promoting their autonomy, integration, and effective participation in society (Silva & Yazbek, 2014).

Furthermore, the enactment of the Statute of the Elderly in 2003 in Brazil is of paramount importance, as it legally represents the rights of the elderly, as it ensures the fundamental rights of the elderly in the social, health, physical, financial and psychological spheres (Martins & Massarollo, 2010).

Articles 2 and 3 of the Statute of the Elderly (2003, p. 8) state that:

The elderly enjoy all the fundamental rights inherent to the human person (...) ensuring them, by law or by other means, all the facilities for the preservation of their physical and mental health, their moral, intellectual, spiritual, and social improvement, in conditions of freedom and dignity. It is the obligation of the family, the community, society, and the Government to ensure the elderly, with absolute priority, the realization of the right to life, health, food, education, culture, sports, leisure, work, citizenship, freedom, dignity, respect and family and community life.

The Statute of the Elderly is a historical milestone for the rights of the elderly, as it establishes protective norms for the elderly and a greater number of legal mechanisms, expanding the system of effective protection for the elderly, who also have their rights guaranteed in the Federal Constitution (1988).

Another significant advance in the field of social protection occurred through the enactment of the Unified Social Assistance System (SUAS) in Brazil in 2005, which organizes the provision of a network of protection services to the vulnerable and people in the context of violence, including the elderly.

In special social protection of medium complexity, there are the Specialized Centers for Social Assistance (CREAS), responsible for monitoring families and individuals in the context of violence, in such equipment the team is composed of psychologists, social workers, and lawyers. On the other hand, special social protection of high complexity is exercised through institutional care, when people have their family and community ties broken and need to be sheltered for protection purposes, as established in the National Classification of Social Assistance Services (MDS, 2009).

About the elderly, the CREAS generally receive referrals from the Public Prosecutor's Office, police stations, and the elderly's relatives, so this equipment is a great articulator of the protection network. Situations of social vulnerability and violence around the elderly are often intertwined with intense family conflicts, which requires the team to systematically monitor this family to know how the care relationships with the elderly will be, as well as to identify the extent to which this family can exercise its protective function. If there is no possibility for the elderly to continue with a family member, neighbors, or someone who has a bond with them, this elderly person is referred to the shelter through institutional care.

Thus, it is understood that the elderly protection network is composed of several equipment, from different areas, such as Courts, the Public Prosecutor's Office, Social Assistance services, and general and specialized police stations.

CONTEXTUALIZATION OF THE FIELD AND ACTIVITIES CARRIED OUT

The Public Security Organ for the defense of the elderly worked from 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., Monday to Friday; The internship took place once a week, in the institution's

Research Department, in the morning shift, between April and June 2022. The team responsible for the morning shift was composed of five public agents responsible for receiving complaints made in person, as well as by phone calls, making police reports (BO), and carrying out subpoenas and arrests. The internship took place at the top of the Public Security Agency for the Defense of the Elderly, and activities were carried out in reception, care, home visits, and articulation with the Social Assistance network through the realization of various referrals.

The basic document that governs and supports the institution's actions is the Statute of the Elderly (2003), created by Law No. 10,741, of October 1, 2003, which regulates and protects the rights of the elderly, understood as those people aged 60 years or older (Statute of the Elderly, 2003). In this way, cases that were not within the competence of the Organ commonly arrived, since they were not crimes of mistreatment, negligence, embezzlement, abandonment, or discrimination to be an elderly person, requiring the police agent to guide them to seek the responsible Organ by law.

RECEPTION AND INDIVIDUAL CARE

The reception consisted of specialized and empathetic listening to the demands that came to the Agency. During the consultations, the reality found was of many family conflicts, of which, many times, the children themselves, grandchildren, and the spouse of the elderly were the aggressors. This fact corroborates research carried out worldwide, where it was found that 2/3 of the aggressors were formed by the children or spouses of the elderly (Minayo, 2008). In addition, international analyses highlight that the issue of the elderly continues to be a problem of family responsibility, many of which do not have the preparation, willingness, or conditions to adequately meet the needs of the elderly (Minayo, 2008).

In one of the cases that reached the Agency, an elderly man reported that a few years ago, his son physically assaulted him in search of money while he was under the influence of psychoactive drugs, and is currently on the run after the elderly man made a BO. While reporting the event, she became emotional and expressed her discontent with the situation (because her son is on the run and has not yet responded to the aggression he committed) and disappointment with her son. During his outburst, the police officer left him alone with the intern to make him more comfortable. Furthermore, the vast majority of cases involved the financial assets of the elderly.

Empathetic and welcoming listening to the pain and vulnerability of these elderly people proved to be an essential instrument, because, in addition to making complaints, many took the opportunity to express their complaints and tell about their lives, such as showing photos of their family members and talking about their day-to-day lives. It was perceived that many of these elderly people just needed someone to listen to their anguish and talk to them, demonstrating a lack of socialization and attention.

HOME VISITS

During the internship, the intern carried out 6 home visits in two weeks, together with two police officers to the homes of the elderly, whose cases came to the institution through complaints. Due attention and care were given to the intern's safety. Fortunately, the visits took place smoothly, without risks to the intern's safety.

During the visits, it was possible to observe the reality of many elderly Brazilians, victims of abandonment, neglect, and countless neglects, as well as several elderly people who were in a situation of extreme poverty. One of the visits was made to the home of a bedridden 78-year-old woman who lived with her elderly husband and adult daughter who had psychological problems. The elderly woman lived in unhealthy conditions, with bedsores on her body and the appearance of a malnourished person. Her daughter claimed that she did not have the psychological conditions to take care of her mother and the house, taking responsibility for making only the meals. The elderly couple had another daughter who lived in the back house, against whom the complaint was made. Questions were asked about the reality of the situation to the husband and daughter of the elderly woman since she was sleeping at the time of the visit.

The home visit provided a greater approximation of the intern to the reality of these elderly people, revealing itself as a fundamental tool to identify the main psychosocial demands of the elderly, contextualizing their reality. It is also understood that the limitations of families in terms of their protective function were often due to their financial condition, which denounces the absence of the Brazilian State to also exercise a protective function towards these families. This element is fundamental so that we do not fall back on punitive discourses of families, who lived in conditions of misery.

ARTICULATION OF THE SOCIAL PROTECTION NETWORK AND REFERRALS

Care networks are practical and symbolic models that mix actions of civil society and public power, articulating themselves in an intersectoral and interdisciplinary way, and

configuring themselves in a network of social support and protection, through a dynamic and flexible praxis (Macedo & Conceição, 2017).

This work was developed in conjunction with the home visits carried out, where in cases where it was found by the intern, together with the institution, that the case presented a situation of personal and social risk due to violation of rights, and a situational report was made on what was found and was forwarded to the responsible bodies that make up the SUAS, according to the level of complexity of each case received. As an example, continuing the above report, it was considered that it presents a situation of personal and social risk due to violation of rights, based on Article 3 of the National Policy for the Elderly, which governs that it is the duty of the family, society and the state to ensure the elderly all the rights of citizenship, defending their dignity, well-being and the right to life. Thus, the case was forwarded to CREAS, so that a home visit could be carried out, to better understand the situation and identify possibilities of caregivers or references in the family and/or community environment as a strategy of care and protection for the elderly, it was also suggested that, given the impossibilities of articulation with the family/community, think with the elderly, the possibility of an offer of institutional care.

Based on the visits, it was observed that many of the elderly lived in precarious socioeconomic conditions, which exacerbated their condition of vulnerability, with many receiving a pension in the amount of one minimum wage or Continuous Cash Benefit (BPC), which, as in one of the cases that were referred to CREAS, are often appropriated by another family member and used for other purposes, alienating the elderly from their assets and violating their rights.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

According to Article 3 of the Statute of the Elderly, it is the obligation of the family, the community, society, and the Government to ensure the elderly realization of the right to life, health, food, leisure, and citizenship, among others (2003).

It was identified that, despite the advances achieved in the rights and protection of the elderly, there is still a great marginalization, negligence, and exclusion of this social category, something that is symptomatic of capitalist society and reflects on the functioning of the service itself, with the agents reporting their discontent with the lack of resources and funds, given that, The demand is too high for the team to handle, with scarce space resources and materials.

The high demand for violation of the rights of the elderly points to how neglected the elderly continue to be in society and highlights the importance of strengthening the care and protection network through public policies and raising awareness in the community and society about aging and the possibilities that this phase of life can provide to the elderly. Understanding them as a subject of historical, social, and singular rights, in addition to the biological, understanding that, as they age, the elderly go through a reformulation of their social roles, needing to be engaged in activities endowed with meaning and meaning that make them feel good, that this elderly person feels part of society, that their socialization is ensured.

The internship provided a greater understanding of the functioning of the SUAS, and the importance of intersectoriality for the realization of social rights, through programs and benefits, protecting all citizens, especially those who historically, politically, economically, and culturally have become more vulnerable, such as the elderly. Finally, he explained the importance of awareness of the historical-social determinants that influence the health and well-being of the elderly for an ethical-political practice of the psychologist, who in Social Assistance, shows himself as an enabler of rights, transforming his social reality and distancing himself from the individualistic and biologizing-pathologizing model that permeated the history of psychology for years, making it an instrument at the service of the dominant class in a capitalist society.

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