

ABUSIVE SUPERVISION AND THE SILENCE OF TRAINEES**SUPERVISÃO ABUSIVA E O SILÊNCIO DOS ESTAGIÁRIOS****SUPERVISIÓN ABUSIVA Y SILENCIO DE LOS APRENDICES**Harrison Bachion Ceribeli¹Sofia Bothrel Fernandes²Carolina Machado Saraiva³

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ABSTRACT

This article aimed to identify the different types of abusive supervision that trainees suffer from within organizations and how this affects their willingness to remain silent, failing to share information, opinions and suggestions for improvement. The in-depth interview method was used, and ten trainees, students of the Administration course and residents of the city of Franca, State of São Paulo, were interviewed. After pondering the results obtained in the interviews, it was concluded that there are several ways of abusive supervision that trainees suffer in their work environment, such as supervisor shouts, attribution of inadequate guilt, public criticism and public joking. The most common reactions to these situations were feelings of humiliation and frustration, feelings of discomfort and embarrassment, feeling of being coerced, wronged and offended, demotivation and, in some situations, feeling of not being able and abandoning, that is, abusive supervision affects the emotional state of students. It is important to note that it is not only trainees who are adversely affected by abusive supervision but also the organization. Through the interviews conducted, it has been found that when the trainee supervisor behaves abusively, students opt for silence, which means that they choose not to share important information, suggestions and ideas.

Keywords: Abusive supervisor. Organizational silence. Trainees program.

RESUMO

Este artigo teve como objetivo de pesquisa identificar os diferentes tipos de supervisão abusiva que os estagiários sofrem dentro das organizações e como isso afeta a disposição deles de permanecerem em silêncio, deixando de compartilhar informações, opiniões e sugestões de melhoria. Foi utilizado o método de entrevista em profundidade, sendo entrevistados dez estagiários, alunos do curso de Administração e residentes na cidade de Franca, Estado de São Paulo. Após ponderar os resultados obtidos nas entrevistas, concluiu-se que existem diversas maneiras de supervisão abusiva que os estagiários sofrem em seu ambiente de trabalho, tais como gritos do supervisor, atribuição de culpa de maneira inadequada, crítica em público e ridicularização em público. As reações mais comuns a essas situações foram os sentimentos de humilhação e frustração, sentimentos de desconforto e constrangimento, sensação de estar sendo coagido, injustiçado e ofendido, desmotivação e, em

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algumas situações, sensação de não ser capaz e de abandono, ou seja, a supervisão abusiva afeta o estado emocional dos estudantes. É importante assinalar que não são apenas os estagiários que são afetados negativamente pela supervisão abusiva, mas também a organização. Por meio das entrevistas conduzidas, verificou-se que, quando o supervisor de estágio se comporta de maneira abusiva, os estudantes optam pelo silêncio, o que significa que eles escolhem não compartilhar informações importantes, sugestões e ideias.

Palavras-chave: Supervisão abusiva. Silêncio organizacional. Programa de estágio.

RESUMEN

Este artículo tuvo como objetivo investigar para identificar los diferentes tipos de supervisión abusiva que sufren los pasantes dentro de las organizaciones y cómo eso afecta su voluntad de permanecer en silencio, sin compartir información, opiniones y sugerencias de mejora. Se utilizó el método de entrevista en profundidad, con diez pasantes entrevistados, estudiantes del curso de Administración y residentes en la ciudad de Franca, Estado de São Paulo. Después de considerar los resultados obtenidos en las entrevistas, se concluyó que hay varias formas de supervisión abusiva que sufren los pasantes en su entorno de trabajo, como los gritos del supervisor, la culpa inadecuada, la crítica pública y el ridículo público. Las reacciones más comunes a estas situaciones fueron sentimientos de humillación y frustración, sentimientos de incomodidad y vergüenza, un sentimiento de ser coaccionado, agraviado y ofendido, desmotivación y, en algunas situaciones, una sensación de incapacidad y de abandono, por lo tanto, la supervisión abusiva afecta el estado emocional de los estudiantes. Es importante tener en cuenta que no solo los pasantes se ven afectados negativamente por la supervisión abusiva, sino también la organización. A través de las entrevistas realizadas, se descubrió que, cuando el supervisor de prácticas se comporta de manera abusiva, los estudiantes optan por el silencio, lo que significa que eligen no compartir información, sugerencias e ideas importantes.

Palabras clave: Supervisor abusivo. Silencio organizacional. Programa de pasantías y prácticas.

1 INTRODUCTION

The internship is the opportunity that higher education or technical students find to connect what they have learned in theory with practice, in addition to being a way to enter the labor market in areas where interns are being prepared to work (SILVA, 2015). It is a fundamental mechanism for professionals who are starting their careers, as it helps prepare them to face the obstacles and challenges at the beginning of this journey (SCALABRIN; MOLINARI, 2013).

In addition to being relevant for students, the internship is also important for organizations. When the supervisor provides adequate guidance to the interns, it allows them to obtain better academic and professional development and, therefore, to be better prepared for the performance of their profession when they complete their studies. It also contributes by facilitating the selection process of future employees, since the organization has accurate information about the performance presented by the students and the potential they demonstrated throughout the internship (MACHINESKI; MACHADO; SILVA, 2011).

Internship supervisors can contribute to the process of training the future professional, either by stimulating values, helping them to develop new skills or even guiding them on how to adapt to the demands of the current job market (FERREIRA; REIS, 2016). However,

fighting the tide, some supervisors manifest abusive behavior in organizations, harming the performance of interns and their professional training.

According to Tepper (2000), professionals who are abused by the head are negatively affected both at work and in their personal lives and end up becoming less committed to the organization, and may even leave their job.

In this context, the research objective was defined to identify which types of abusive supervision interns suffer in organizations and how this affects their willingness to remain silent, failing to share information, opinions and suggestions for improvement.

The justification for carrying out this work is due to the need to raise a discussion about how organizational agents who occupy leadership positions often adopt dysfunctional behaviors in relation to interns, failing to contribute to their training and, at the same time, creating traumas that can affect their entire professional trajectory.

2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The theoretical framework begins with abusive supervision.

2.1 Abusive supervision

Even though history is filled with examples of people who occupied positions in the top hierarchy of organizations and maintained hostile conduct against their direct reports, only in the last 20 years there has been research dedicated to understanding the causes and consequences of abusive supervision, which encompasses behaviors such as outbursts of anger, inappropriate blaming, and public ridicule (TEPPER; SIMON; PARK, 2017).

The term abusive supervision refers to exposure, in a continuous manner, to hierarchical abuse. A common example is when a boss, who had a bad day, explosively takes it out on his subordinates, making this attitude a frequent everyday behavior (TEPPER, 2007).

Publicly criticize; invade privacy; receiving credit without due merit; inappropriately assigning blame; being rude and/or displaying tantrums audibly; deliberately not providing important information; or be coercive (OLIVEIRA, 2017, p.2).

In addition to the aforementioned behaviors, in some cases, supervisors can be too controlling, so as to reduce the intrinsic motivation of their subordinates; monitor too much; not supporting the team; not offering considerable autonomy; remove workers from the decision-making process; or pressure subordinates to think, feel or act in a certain way (MARTINS, 2014). It is important to highlight, however, that the categorization of a certain boss as abusive necessarily depends on the subordinate's perception (OLIVEIRA, 2017).

Despite the harmful effects resulting from this type of conduct, abusive supervisors can be hostile towards their subordinates without the intention of causing physical or psychological harm (OLIVEIRA, 2017). A manager can, for example, mistreat his subordinates in order to obtain high performance or send the message that mistakes will not be tolerated (TEPPER, 2007).

Abusive supervision, which may not be considered divergent if it fits into organizational norms and culture (OLIVEIRA, 2017), is related to a wide range of dysfunctional outcomes, both at the individual and team level (TEPPER; SIMON; PARK, 2017), which may even have a negative effect on the organization's creativity and innovative capacity (MARTINS, 2014).

Tepper (2000) conducted a study with 741 workers and found that, when they notice that their leaders act abusively, they are inclined to have higher turnover, lower job and life satisfaction in general, less affective organizational commitment, as well as higher levels of depression, anxiety and emotional exhaustion.

Along the same lines, Starrat and Grandy (2010) concluded that a boss who acts abusively towards subordinates negatively affects their level of satisfaction with work, leading to the deterioration of their emotional states and social lives, which tends to increase work-family conflicts and reduce organizational productivity. Silva's research (2018), in turn, also proved a strong correlation between abusive supervision and organizational commitment, in an inverse relationship.

In addition, Wei and Si (2011) found that employees of lower hierarchical levels, when faced with abusive leadership, present counterproductive behaviors for the organization and, as a result, the possibility of failure in the execution of tasks, sabotage (destruction of material property of the organization) and theft.

It appears, therefore, that abusive leaders are a problem in the daily lives of organizations, as they are responsible for greater organizational stress, dissemination of negative organizational values, lack of hope and confidence in the work environment, lack of group cohesion and weakening of team spirit (REED, 2004).

Abusive supervision can occur due to several factors, from the supervisor's personality to the subordinates' personality. Thus, it is necessary to seek to understand how external factors contribute to the emergence and maintenance of abusive leadership behaviors. In a research carried out in 2017 at the University of Lisbon, Oliveira analyzed the supervisor-organization, supervisor-employee relationships, organizational background, characteristics of subordinates and demographic characteristics of supervisors and subordinates, examining 20 hypotheses.

The factors that were directly associated with the existence and/or persistence of abusive behavior by supervisors were, in order of importance: organizational background, supervisor-organization relationship and characteristics of subordinates. The organizational background category stands out, in which the existence of an organizational climate based on conflict and excessive competitiveness is positively correlated with abusive conduct on the part of leaders (OLIVEIRA, 2017; KERNAN; RACIOT; FISHER, 2016). It is as if the company presented its employees with a favorable environment for conducting relationships based on practices of embarrassment, anger, hatred, frustration, extreme command and punishment.

Another point that stands out in Oliveira's research (2017) is the finding that supervisors who were subjected to abusive leadership in the past tend to repeat this behavior towards their subordinates, either because they understand that this is the most efficient way of conducting of the team, or because they understand that this is the company's modus operandi. This premise is reinforced by the organization's silence in the face of abusive situations, whether by non-action or even by awarding abusive conduct, understood as energetic or motivating (OLIVEIRA, 2017). In many organizations, the abusive behavior

adopted by leaders is legitimate, as it is understood that it is applied as a corrective mechanism in situations that could potentially harm business results (LIAN et al., 2014).

As for the high correlation found between abusive supervision and the characteristics of the subordinate, what was observed in the research by Oliveira (2017) is that people with profiles called "negative affectivity" and/or "neuroticism" have a predisposition to interpret situations several as abusive, and this finding is corroborated by the studies by Brees, Martinko and Harvey (2016). The perception of abusive supervision, therefore, can be a reflection of the subordinates' self-image, feelings and behaviors of fear and insecurity.

It is expensive to clarify the organizational responsibility in relation to abusive supervision, regardless of the subordinate's profile, with neither here nor in the cited literature a kind of softening or disclaiming the abusive supervisor or the company. Also, examining Articles 932 and 933 of Law No. 10.406, of January 10, 2002 (BRASIL, 2002), it is evident that, in the legal sphere, the employer must answer for the acts performed by its employees in the exercise of their functions, being responsible, therefore, for the civil reparation owed to an employee in the event that he suffers psychological harassment by other employees in the work environment.

The main characteristic of abusive behavior is its repetition, systematization, repeated oppression with the intention of harming the person, their well-being and their dignity. Thus, regardless of the subordinate's profile, the fact that there is abusive action should already be a reason for rejection by the company, and the appropriate actions must be taken, which include educational measures, such as clarifying the employee who presents abusive conduct in the work environment, to severe disciplinary measures (MARAZZO et al., 2017), including the dismissal of the aggressor (ZIMMERMANN; SANTOS; LIMA, 2006).

2.2 Organizational silence

Organizational silence can be defined as a group-level phenomenon characterized by the generalized retention of information, opinions or concerns of employees regarding issues or problems related to work (MORRISON; MILLIKEN, 2003). It is the lack of voice of individuals in the organization or a communication strategy adopted by them, which emerges as a response to a range of negative perceptions they have (PINDER; HARLOS, 2001).

Organizational silence manifests itself in various circumstances, involving various issues related to work, whether they are economic (such as operational inefficiencies), social (such as the various forms of harassment), moral (such as discrimination) or legal (such as corruption) (MOURA-PAULA, 2014).

According to Paula and Ferraz (2015), this silence is due to the employee's relationship with their peers and hierarchical superior, as well as an unfolding of a more or less favorable environment for such behavior due to the prevailing beliefs in the organizational culture.

In the literature, references to three types of organizational silence are found: acquiescent or consenting, defensive and pro-social. The acquiescent silence is manifested when the employee has a feeling of inability to make a difference in the organization, which results from the perception that their views on the business are not considered relevant and also from the lack of return in relation to the contributions presented, deciding omit important opinions and information driven by conformation (BRITO, 2017). It is, therefore, an alien behavior, based on the feeling of impotence, which results in expressions of agreement and

support motivated by the reduced self-efficacy nurtured by the individual (AVERY; QUISONES, 2002).

In turn, defensive silence can be understood as a self-protective behavior of the employee, stimulated by fear or by the perception that the organization is somehow at risk, generating the omission of some information or even deviating responses the attention that is on it (DYNE; ANG; BOTERO, 2003). This type of silence originates from a reflection on which ideas or information should be retained for self-preservation (PAULA; FERRAZ, 2015).

Finally, in opposition to the other two types mentioned, prosocial silence, also known as constructive silence, is proactive and occurs when the professional decides to omit information in order to benefit the organization or other people, regardless of the results that this attitude can generate (BRITO, 2017). This silence is seen as a form of cooperation, as the objective that moves the employee is to preserve other professionals or even the business itself, who could be harmed by the dissemination of certain negative information (SILVA, 2012).

In general, the individual's willingness to manifest themselves in the work environment or not to do so is related to how each person faces the problems they have to deal with in the organization and the support received from others at work (TAHMASEBI; SOBHANIPOUR; AGHAZIARATI, 2013).

Furthermore, silence can be a response by employees to a centralized management model, in which there is no opening for participation in the decision-making process involving the organization (MORRISON; MILLIKEN, 2003).

In the specific case of defensive organizational silence, one of its antecedents is abusive supervision, which awakens in employees the fear of expressing themselves, which is the basis for this type of behavior (KIEWITZ et al., 2016). In situations where there is abuse and excesses by the head, fear appears as a reaction to the dangers, threats and uncertainties perceived by subordinates (OLIVEIRA, 2017). Employees opt for silence as a safe exit (TAHMASEBI; SOBHANIPOUR; AGHAZIARATI, 2013).

Organizational silence does not only involve the act of not speaking, but also the act of not writing, not being present, not listening and ignoring, reflecting a work environment of censorship, marginalization, trivialization, exclusion and personal attacks that work as ways to discount the own problems in others (TAHMASEBI; SOBHANIPOUR; AGHAZIARATI, 2013).

3 METHOD

This research can be classified as exploratory of a qualitative nature. This type of research aims to increase familiarity with the investigated problem, aiming to make it more explicit and/or build hypotheses (GERHARDT; SILVEIRA, 2009). Furthermore, it seeks to gather information about the researched subject, defining a specific area of analysis (SEVERINO, 2017) and works with interpretations of social reality (BAUER; GASKELL, 2017).

For data collection with the research subjects, the method of in-depth interviews was chosen, which is based on the constructivist conception of human behavior, that is, on the

view of the human being as a person who builds senses and meanings through which he understands, interprets and also handles the reality he is inserted in (AIRES, 2011).

Ten Administration students were interviewed, inhabitants of the city of Franca, State of São Paulo, who were doing internships in some organization. By conducting in-depth interviews, the intention was to raise the trainees' perception about the behaviors of their immediate supervisors at work, as well as the behaviors they adopt when faced with information and ideas relevant to the organization.

To select the interviewees, initially, searches were carried out for profiles published on LinkedIn that met the pre-established criteria. Then, the students found were contacted, scheduling interviews with those who agreed to participate in the study. The interns interviewed chose to carry out the interview via Skype, given the ease and convenience that this means of communication provides.

Data analysis was performed using the technique called Content Analysis, which starts from a broader view of the investigated problem, which makes it important and with potential for theoretical development in the field of Administration (MOZZATO; GRZYBOVSKI, 2011).

It is noteworthy that the application of this technique in the field of organizational studies has increased, mainly due to the researchers' concern with scientific rigor and analytical depth in qualitative research (MOZZATO, GRZYBOVSKI; 2011).

Content Analysis is based on the decomposition of the discourse and identification of groups of representations or units of analysis, from which it becomes possible to reconstruct meanings that allow a deeper understanding of the interpretation of reality by the studied group (SILVA; GOBBI; SIMÃO, 2011).

To carry out the Content Analysis in this investigation, the guidelines proposed by Silva, Gobbi and Simão (2011) were followed, following the steps suggested by these same authors, which include the decomposition of the discourse and identification of units of analysis that allow the phenomena addressed to be categorized, providing support for the meanings that express the way the group studies and interprets reality to be reconstructed and then understood.

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The interviews were conducted with interns who are studying Administration in the city of Franca, located in the State of São Paulo. The profile of each respondent can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1 – Profile of interns interviewed

Intern	Declared sex	Internship time at the company
E1	Male	3 months
E2	Male	7 months
E3	Male	2 months
E4	Female	8 months

E5	Female	4 months
E6	Female	9 months
E7	Female	1 month
E8	Female	10 months
E9	Female	8 months
E10	Female	6 months

Source: Elaborated by the authors

The results obtained through the interviews were analysed and, later, divided into two types: the first focused on the different forms of abusive supervision suffered by the interns and how they feel when faced with this type of situation, while the second topic addressed the issue the silence of the interns in the organizational environment and the relationship that this phenomenon maintains with the abuses practiced by supervisors.

4.1 Abusive supervision over interns

Of the ten interns interviewed, nine reported that they had already suffered or witnessed some type of abusive behavior by the occupants of management positions in the companies they work for.

When asked if the boss had ever yelled in the workplace, eight of the ten interns answered yes and reported that, when this happened, they felt uncomfortable, offended, coerced and/or humiliated.

The following excerpts expose some reports regarding the situation in question:

In my two internships, the bosses were always very ignorant, I stopped working with the first one for not only yelling at me, but also at all the employees. I questioned why and the answer was: 'It's my way'. Even though the second one yells at me too, I'm having to deal with the situation, because I need the internship. (E1).

In my first internship I had bosses who did yell, in addition to constantly offending. Futile situations became the stage for a real skirmish. In addition to making us sad, we ended up unmotivated with that job. (E3).

It happened a few times. I always feel very embarrassed and humiliated at the time, but when the stress goes away and he talks calmly with me, the situation is calmer, even though I know it will happen again soon. (E4).

Yes, my boss already yelled at me. These are not attitudes that occur very often, but when this situation came up, I felt extremely uncomfortable and offended. When it happened to me, in a situation of extreme stress, I felt cornered and speechless, a complete incompetent even if, in the end, it wasn't the case and there was the "apology". (E7).

The interns were also asked if their bosses had already shown any lack of control motivated by anger in the workplace. Of the ten interviewees, six stated that they had already experienced situations of this type themselves and two stated that they had witnessed this happening to other people.

As evidenced during the interviews carried out, this situation, typical of abusive supervisors who seek to diminish and humiliate their subordinates in public (TEPPER, SIMON, PARK; 2017), causes discomfort and embarrassment not only in the individual who was the target of the outburst of anger by part of the leadership, but also in those who witnessed the event.

I've seen this happen to coworkers. The boss would take out the problems of his personal life on an employee and threaten her with dismissal. (E3).

The boss had problems with another employee and took it out on me, I was humiliated, and that made me feel totally useless. (E5).

Yes, my boss has had outbursts of anger audibly and directed at me for no apparent reason. There was no swearing, but he was rude and asked, 'Why do I pay your salary if there are no results? ', since my role was not being responsible for production or operational supervision, which was the problem in the end, the real reason for the lack of results. (E7).

Yes, this always happens when he is upset or in a bad mood. When it happens, I always feel humiliated. (E8).

This situation, described by intern E7, indicates yet another problem: the inappropriate attribution of blame to employees, behavior that can be considered abusive (TEPPER, 2000). When they were asked about the blame attributed by their bosses without there being any reason for it, seven of the ten interviewees reported that this happens in the places where they work and makes them feel frustrated and wronged.

Yes, the feeling was unpleasant. I couldn't say that it was the boss's own fault, I was in a situation where I didn't have which way to run. (E1).

My boss is very stressed and doesn't have the patience to look for documents or objects he needs at the moment. He has already blamed me several times for having taken or not having delivered the document he needed, at that moment and I always have to go to his office to look for it and I always find it. (E4).

Yes. It did not happen, however, nowadays, the frequency of these attitudes has increased. I'm still in the training phase, I haven't learned everything about all the functions and I still need follow-up. There were some problems and I didn't have the necessary training and the boss ended up appointing me as the main person in charge, even though he didn't provide me with the

knowledge for the activity. Before making any decision, I had contacted him and he gave me the guarantee to carry out each of the actions I took. In these situations I feel wronged and frustrated, because I always do my best and it seems like it's never enough. (E7).

The supervisors' abusive behaviors are not only associated with the act of shouting, they also include humiliation and/or any attitude that attacks or offends subordinates (ALMEIDA, 2018). When asked about ridicule in public, four interns reported that they suffer this type of abuse and that it makes them feel embarrassed, insecure, offended and humiliated.

My boss puts down nicknames that demean and humiliate me in front of other employees, reporting how incapable I am and making cruel jokes. (E5).

He's ridiculed me in meetings and on the phone, he's questioned my ability to understand situation X and carry out my activities even though I'm the expert on the subject. These attitudes make me feel extremely offended and unresponsive, as I don't know how to handle embarrassing situations like these. (E7).

Among all respondents, only two reported that their boss does not criticize them in public. The other eight suffer from this type of behavior frequently and mentioned that they feel incapable and incompetent as a result.

Yes and oftentimes. There is a meeting every morning where we can discuss the progress of activities, improvements and development points parallel to production. At this meeting, not just me, but the entire staff is criticized and ridiculed every day. We are called incompetent. And this makes me feel incapable and discouraged, because criticism is not constructive, it is just used to ridicule and destroy the psychological of the people involved. (E7).

During the interviews, it was questioned whether there was support from the head, and, of the ten respondents, only three reported that they receive some support from their supervisor, highlighting, however, that they do not consider it sufficient. This lack of support leaves the interns who participated in this study unmotivated and makes them feel abandoned.

Sometimes. Teams have to report to him, but he doesn't help any team do their jobs. (E4).

Provide support depending on what's possible, but most of the time when staff need support, the problem comes back worse. We feel displaced, without support from the boss, who should guide and support us in times of indecision and difficulties. (E7).

When asked if the boss offered autonomy to the employees, only two interns said yes. The other eight reported that they do not have any autonomy and that, therefore, they feel

unmotivated and frustrated in relation to the learning expectations they had when they started the internship.

I feel that my boss doesn't trust me and, as a result, I feel insecure and don't know if I learn the roles as I should. (E1).

When I realize that my boss doesn't trust me, I feel unmotivated, I get into a conflict, as I want to learn, but I'm afraid and insecure. (E5).

When respondents were asked about privacy within the company, they all said that the boss does not exceed limits in this regard in relation to any of the subordinates, and the same result was observed when they were asked about situations in which the boss received credit for some function he didn't perform or idea he didn't generate.

At the end of the first part of the interviews, it was questioned how abusive supervision impacts the intern within the company, with nine respondents reporting that they feel emotionally affected and begin to doubt their abilities, even though they are qualified for the role. Additionally, they mentioned that they feel humiliated, afraid, incapable and insecure.

It makes me feel terrible and humiliated, I end up doubting my work and my ability. (E4).

Most of the time, I feel humiliated and insecure, wanting to let go of everything. I entered the internship with the intention of learning, but I feel I don't learn as I should and I still feel incapable. (E5).

This kind of behavior from my boss makes me feel incompetent, even though I know I'm not. (E7).

In daily fear, incapable and humiliated. At work I'm always feeling pressured and it doesn't come out perfect because I always have anxiety attacks. (E8).

By analyzing the responses obtained for this first group of questions, it was found that the most recurrent types of abusive supervision that the interns interviewed experienced or witnessed in the organizations where they work were: lack of control accompanied by screams, criticism in a public environment, attribution of blame inadequate, lack of autonomy and ridicule. All these abuses have in common the fact that they expose and embarrass professionals, as described by Tepper (2007), Tepper, Simon and Park (2017) and Oliveira (2017).

A summary of the types of abusive supervision reported by respondents can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2 – Types of abusive supervision suffered by respondents

Types of abusive supervision	E1	E2	E3	E4	E5	E6	E7	E8	E9	E10
Yelling	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	
Anger-driven loss of control	x		x		x		x	x		x
Inappropriate attribution of blame	x	x		x	x	x	x			x
Offense or ridicule					x		x	x	x	
Public criticism	x	x			x	x	x		x	x
Lack of support	x		x	x	x		x		x	x
Lack of autonomy	x	x		x	x	x	x	x		x

Source: Elaborated by the authors

Furthermore, it was concluded that, when witnessing or experiencing abusive behavior, employees react in different ways: they feel humiliated, they experience great discomfort and demotivation, they feel fear, they feel offended, insecure, coerced and embarrassed, etc. Though varied, reactions to abusive supervision are all very negative and substantially affect the individual's well-being.

4.2 Abusive supervision and the silence of trainees

After describing the abusive behaviors of the heads in relation to the interns interviewed and how they feel about it, an analysis was carried out of how abusive supervision is related to the silence in the workplace, that is, the decision not to share information, suggestions and ideas (MARTINS, 2019).

In organizations, employees experience a conflict, which involves talking or remaining silent on matters of interest to their employer. To make this decision, they take into account the experiences they experience daily in their work environment and their relationship with the head (MILLIKEN; MORRISON, 2003). Therefore, silence is a very relevant passive response, which deserves to be widely studied (MORRISON, 2014).

When asked about silent behavior, eight interns stated that they fail to express their views because they feel pressured by their supervisors to think and/or act in a specific way. The excerpts transcribed below illustrate this finding.

He always likes to get all employees thinking the same way he thinks, and when someone has a contrary opinion, he quickly reprimands the person and everyone ends up being afraid to air their point of view. . (E4).

Always happens. My boss pressures me and other employees to act in the way he thinks is most appropriate. He doesn't accept opinions, so we never discuss possibilities. (E8).

In addition, six interns reported that they are afraid of being reprimanded or of becoming the target of jokes if they present their suggestions and ideas, and that, because of this, they remain silent at various times when they could contribute to the organization.

It depends a lot on the occasion, I hardly share. I'm afraid of the jokes my boss might make. (E3).

I'm afraid to share my ideas with my boss. The few times I've shared it, he doesn't accept it and ends up ignoring it or making jokes about my ability.” (E4).

I'm always afraid of being reprimanded in everything I say. (E8).

It appears, therefore, that when abusive supervision aims to ridicule, it tends to cause distress in subordinates (KERNAN et al., 2011), becoming, therefore, a source of stress (TEPPER et al., 2007). In these situations, the employee often does not complain, as he fears being labeled as a complainer or even a causer of problems and socially isolates himself (BOWEN; BLACKMON, 2003), which ends up contributing to the decision to remain silent.

In addition, when the subject has already been the target or witnessed a situation of ridicule in the workplace, they become more reluctant to share their ideas, in order to avoid answers such as “I am not interested in your stupid suggestions” (TEPPER et al., 2007).

An interesting fact is that, among all respondents who have experienced or witnessed some type of abusive supervision, only one reported that he questioned why the boss acts in such a way towards employees, obtaining the following answer: “It's my way ”. The other interviewees chose not to question the supervisor, for fear of getting rude answers or being mistreated.

That is, professionals who are subjected to abusive supervision are generally not willing to confront the head and protest against abuse episodes, but they also stop talking, denouncing deficiencies in work processes and expressing their opinions (DUTTON et al., 2002).

The destructive impact that abusive supervision exerts on employees has such an extensive magnitude that it is not limited only to reducing the quality of life at work, it also reduces the well-being they experience outside the organization (SCHAT; FRONE; KELLOWAY, 2006).

Of the ten respondents, four reported that when the boss screams or criticizes them without reason or makes cruel jokes, in addition to feeling humiliated, they are stressed and the family ends up being affected, as they sometimes “take it” at home. As explained by Hoobler and Brass (2006), when individuals experience abusive supervision, they become likely to reflect the consequences of this in their interaction with family members.

As I need the internship and I can't respond to these bosses' attitudes, I end up taking it out on my mother, slamming the refrigerator door, etc. There have been cases of me taking it out on other employees. (E1).

When I'm humiliated and I want to spill out, I can't do that on the job. I get home and end up taking it out on my brother. (E7).

Thus, abusive supervision is a relevant stressor in the workplace, which can even cause the loss of employees (WHITMAN; HALBESLEBEN; HOLMES IV, 2014) or interns, considering that humiliated and insecure individuals often choose by silence as a way to preserve and avoid new episodes of abusive behavior on the part of the leadership (TEPPER, 2007), becoming, on the other hand, less committed to the organization (WRIGHT; HOBFOLL, 2004).

It is concluded, then, that the employee's silence should be seen as a natural and logical response when he is a victim of abusive supervision, which harms not only him, but also the organization, which ceases to rely on his ideas, opinions and commitment (BRINSFIELD; EDWARDS; GREENBERG, 2009).

5 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

After weighing the results obtained in the interviews, it was concluded that there are several ways of abusive supervision that interns suffer in their work environment. The most common ways, reported by the interns interviewed, are when the supervisor screams in the work environment, loses control motivated by anger, inappropriately assigns blame, criticizes employees in public, ridicules in public and does not provide support or autonomy to the interns.

The most common reactions to these situations, also reported by the interviewees, were feelings of humiliation and frustration, feelings of discomfort and embarrassment, feeling of being coerced, wronged and offended, lack of motivation and, in some situations, a feeling of not being able and of dropout, that is, abusive supervision affects the emotional state of students. Despite this, interns do not feel comfortable to complain, for fear of public jokes and/or lack of support from their bosses, which leads them to isolate themselves in the work environment.

On the other hand, it is important to point out that it is not only the interns who are negatively affected by abusive supervision, but also the organization. Through the interviews conducted, it was found that, when the internship supervisor behaves abusively, students opt for silence, which means that they choose not to share important information, suggestions and ideas.

When considering these results, there is a need to analyze supervisory practices within the business universe, since, in addition to emotionally affecting interns and their performance at work, they negatively impact the operation of companies, which no longer have important information and ideas that could potentially bring profits to the business.

Additionally, it is evident that organizations should provide a work environment more prone to learning for interns, encouraging them to develop bonds of trust with supervisors, which would make them more comfortable to share information and suggestions for improvement.

This study contributes to Administrative Science, since in Brazil the discussion about how abusive supervision affects interns, who are in the process of professional training and will be future workers, is still in an embryonic stage.

Although the results achieved were satisfactory according to the research objective outlined, there are limitations to be considered. One of them resides in the fact that the interviews were carried out with a small group of interns, in only one region of the country, while the other is due to the fact that only Administration students were interviewed.

Thus, it is suggested, for future studies, that this research be replicated in more locations, covering other regions of the country, and that it includes students from other areas. In addition, it is recommended to check whether abusive supervision in relation to interns manifests itself in different ways in large and small companies.

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