

ARTICLE

Works analogous to slavery: an analysis of slaves in the 21st century in Brazil

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Abstract

This article proposes a reflection on Brazil and its works analogous to slavery that has been widely used within the business practices of global capital and is a topic little explored in administration research. The article analyzes the unfolding of works analogous to slavery in the 21st century. This qualitative study consists of a bibliographic and documentary research based on the perspective of dialectical and historical materialism. It analyzes secondary data from infraction notices from the Ministry of Labor and Welfare, the ministry's list of companies engaged in slave labor, and data from Radar SIT (statistics and information dashboard of labor inspection in Brazil) between 1995 and 2022. In addition, this study collected information from journalistic articles that portrayed inspections of modern slave labor, thus enabling examples of this practice in contemporary times. The findings show that the very lack of more assertive public policies and the fragility of the criminal applicability of Brazilian legislation have challenged the eradication of modern slave labor in the country.

Keywords: Exploration. Modern Slavery. Capitalism.

Trabalhos análogos à escravidão: uma análise de indivíduos escravizados no século XXI no Brasil

Resumo

O presente artigo propõe uma reflexão sobre trabalhos análogos à escravidão no Brasil e que têm sido bastante utilizados dentro das práticas empresariais do capital global. Trata-se de tema pouco explorado nas pesquisas em Administração. Nesse sentido, o objetivo central, neste artigo, é analisar os desdobramentos dos trabalhos análogos à escravidão no século XXI. Quanto ao método, usou-se o enfoque materialista histórico-dialético, além de uma abordagem qualitativa contemplada em pesquisas bibliográficas e documentais. Para análise da investigação, entre casos notificados nos anos de 1995 a 2022, foram utilizados os dados secundários de autuação do Ministério do Trabalho e Previdência, bem como sua “lista suja” do trabalho escravo e, ainda, os dados do Radar SIT. Além disso, este escrito tem aporte de matérias jornalísticas que retratam as fiscalizações do trabalho escravo moderno, possibilitando assim exemplificações de suas práticas na coetaneidade. Como resultado, percebeu-se que a própria falta de políticas públicas mais assertivas e a fragilidade da aplicabilidade penal da legislação brasileira têm sido fatores de dificuldade para a erradicação do trabalho escravo moderno no país.

Palavras-chave: Exploração. Escravidão Moderna. Capitalismo.

Trabajos análogos a la esclavitud: un análisis de los esclavos en el siglo XXI en Brasil

Resumen

Este artículo propone una reflexión sobre Brasil y sus trabajos análogos a la esclavitud que han sido ampliamente llevados a cabo dentro de las prácticas empresariales del capital global y es un tema poco explorado en la investigación en Administración. En este sentido, el objetivo principal del artículo es analizar el desenvolvimiento de trabajos análogos a la esclavitud en el siglo XXI. En cuanto al método, se utilizó el materialismo histórico-dialéctico, además de un enfoque cualitativo contemplado en la investigación bibliográfica y documental y para el análisis de la investigación, datos secundarios de las actas de infracción del Ministerio del Trabajo y Previsión Social y su “lista sucia” del trabajo esclavo”, especialmente entre los años 1995 a 2022. Además, este escrito cuenta con el aporte de artículos periodísticos que retratan las inspecciones al trabajo esclavo moderno, lo que permite ejemplificar sus prácticas en la época contemporánea. Como resultado, se percibió que la propia falta de políticas públicas más asertivas y la fragilidad de la aplicabilidad penal de la legislación brasileña han sido factores de dificultad para la erradicación del trabajo esclavo moderno en el país.

Palabras clave: Explotación. Esclavitud moderna. Capitalismo.

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INTRODUCTION

Under a historical-critical reflection, it is possible to analyze the inequalities within a society of classes in contemporaneity and realize that capital enters a crisis process that constitutes another moment of repair and remodeling. In this context, slave labor becomes a constant in global scale relations and is present especially in peripheral countries, as is the case of Brazil. There are management practices with incisive attacks on human rights, deprivation of freedom, extensive and inhumane working hours, and degrading working conditions. According to the International Labor Organization (ILO, 2009), contemporary slavery has been part of the world economy that supports the production of a range of products. For the ILO (2009), although economic growth is fundamental to the development of any country, it alone is insufficient and does not ensure equity, social progress, or eradicate poverty. Thus, social public policies that guarantee the fundamental principles and rights of the worker are indispensable, enabling the claims of opportunities, the fair share of the wealth produced, and the full development of human potential.

That said, even though Brazil, through international agreements, has some legal advances and is a reference in the consolidation of social public policies and in the penal classification of labor in conditions analogous to slavery, Silva and Gentil (2022, p. 2) observe “[...] the inefficiency of the fight against labor analogous to slavery and the need for clearer and even more aggressive public policies in the sense of being really fulfilled, policed and monitored.” Therefore, forced labor is still a harmful problem that plagues the history and the reality of Brazilian society. The issue of slavery has been a lugubrious aspect of business practices and is still a little explored theme in research in Administration.

Thus, the central objective of the present article is to analyze the unfolding of labor analogous to slavery in the 21st century in Brazil, mainly based on data between 1995-2022. According to Ferreira (2015), the purpose of writing has as its primacy to answer a research question and to fill, among other elements, a gap in the scientific knowledge of yesteryear. In this way, we used theoretical frameworks referring to the subject and realized a parallel with the global patterns of the capitalist system, which are widespread propellants of a system of social and economic inequalities, especially in peripheral countries like Brazil. According to Crane (2013), economic and institutional conditions sustain slavery as a business practice, which, even though it is illegal, captive labor is a driving force for profits and business advantages.

Thus, we begin with a brief overview of the Brazilian society and its history of slavery, also bringing some legislative frameworks. As for the methodology, we used a qualitative approach and the historical-dialectical materialism method with the objective of better presenting these life stories, labor conditions, and the vulnerabilities implied within these relations. This materiality is expressed in the aphorism as a whole, is permeated with contradictions, and is in constant movement. On this subject, Triviños (2008) states that the dialectical method, in addition to requiring ample reflexive capacity, needs the support of vast information and sensitivity to capture the meanings and explanations of the phenomena not only at the level of their appearance but also of their essence. Thus, we started with bibliographic and documental research, emphasizing that both use documents as an object of information, but differ in the source of information. While documental research uses primary sources, bibliographical research uses secondary sources (Kripka, Scheller, & Bonotto, 2015, p. 55). Therefore, we used secondary data from the Ministry of Labor and Social Security and its “dirty list” of slave labor and the Labor Inspection System – Radar SIT. Finally, we identified cases of infractions by labor inspectors that were reported in journalistic articles and were made available in electronic media, allowing the exemplification and coeval analysis of slavery experiences in modernity.

The main thread of the article centers on the universal category of labor, present in the work of Marx and Engels, for whom the material production of life generates all forms of human relations. Consequently, the ontological category of labor acts as an imperative in any study that takes the historical totality as its perspective. The text is divided into three sections besides the introduction and final considerations, namely: in the first moment we deal with the debate on the global expansion of capitalism and the emerging inequalities in Brazil, seen under the implications of the past in our present. Subsequently, we deal more directly with the analyses of the discussions on modern slavery, and, in contrast, the labor legislation safeguarded in the country. The last section of the article discusses the influences of the capitalist society as a driving force of labor analogous to slavery.

GLOBAL EXPANSION OF CAPITALISM AND INEQUALITIES IN BRAZIL: IMPLICATIONS OF THE PAST IN THE PRESENT

Historical references are necessary to understand the present reality, although our point of reference is the 21st century and its last decades. Brazil has been going through centuries of social, economic, and racial inequalities. In globalization, according to Burity (2008), multiple patterns shape new economic powers rooted in these social inequalities, which are generalized, deep, and transversal. Thus, such patterns become part of this development based on the colonial and imperialist structure, which will be followed by the neoliberal global expansion of financial and market capital. Thus, market expansion has driven capitalism to various parts of the globe, creating economic and social ties everywhere. With the rapid improvement of production and communication tools, capital leads, with consent or not, all nations to its model of civilization.

For Marx (1980, p. 70) “[...] production not only casts man as a human commodity, but it also produces man as a mentally and physically dehumanized being.” The dehumanized worker, according to Marx (1980), is seen as the lumpenproletariat, situated below the proletariat, which points to his situation of extreme misery, not only in relation to financial resources, but also due to the lack of a political and class consciousness, liable to serve the worth of the capital owners. Still in this context, we have different forms of non-wage labor that are configured as semi-slavery, since the fact that a worker receives a small salary does not mean that he or she is not in a process of alienation and super-exploitation. After all, being a worker and a modern slave does not necessarily mean being imprisoned and forced to do degrading work. We realized that modern slavery, among other elements, is based on the precariousness of labor associated with the whole logic of the nature of capital which flows in its various fractions in the global market; in other words, it is proper to the prescription and manual of the capitalist mode of production.

Meanwhile, modern civilization has made a set of promises: domination of nature, perpetual peace, and a fair and happy society, with universal and sustainable values. However, what we observe is an unbalanced development, of extreme scientification and regulation, in which we have the radicalization of classifications and distinctions creating a dividing line between the nations of the world and their types of global and local social arrangements. According to Burity (2008, p. 3), “[...] social and economic exclusion, ethnic clashes, racial prejudice and violence [...] are oppressions that marked the modernization processes both in advanced capitalism and in the capitalism of the emerging semi-periphery of the capitalist world” – here we highlight the Brazilian case.

In order to analyze modern slavery, we cannot forget Brazil’s slaveholding past. Although slavery in the country was legally extinguished on May 13, 1888, Brazil was the last country in the world to abolish African slavery. It has torn tensions at the core of its historical, social, political, and cultural context, based on this past of exploitation, racism, class, race, gender, and religious prejudice, among others. For some writers, such as Joaquim Nabuco and Gilberto Freyre, the main institutional device of oppression of blacks and the conflicts with our native peoples ended in 1889, since the Proclamation of the Republic universalized, in theory, the right to citizenship. Freyre’s book, *Casa-grande e Senzala* (2005), released in the 1930s, expresses how successful the process of national formation supported by a homogeneous racial base was. Gilberto Freyre’s influence dialogues with a mestizo, unitary Brazilianness of the Brazilian nation, which contributes to interpreting Brazil as a multiracial society, in which the European, African, and indigenous races were and are equally valuable. Freyre’s vision, however, is widely criticized and, for his critics, it is the “myth of racial democracy”.

In anthropological divergence to this idea, Munanga (2004) exposes that the myth of racial democracy has a profound wisdom in society, since it disguises ethnic-racial conflicts, and existing inequalities in different social fields, as well as facilitates the alienation of non-whites. According to Burity (2008, p. 15), “[...] in addition to economic deprivation, most poor Brazilians are of African descent [...] and have had to face racial discrimination that no upward mobility of the successful few has been able to appease.” This is the national portrait of the implications of the past in the present.

In this context, only in 1995 did the Brazilian government recognize the existence of analogous work to slavery in the national territory. In light of this more modern form of human exploitation, on June 1st, 1966, the 1926 Slavery Convention and the 1956 Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery were promulgated through Decree no. 58,563, of 1966 (Decreto nº 58.563, de 01 de junho de 1966). Thus, since the first half of the 20th century, the Brazilian Penal Code (Decreto-lei nº 2.848

de 07 de dezembro de 1940) already pointed out, in its article 149, the reduction and combat of labor analogous to slavery. However, the initial legislation was still flawed, as it allowed a margin and dubieties of interpretation by jurists. In that period, it was considered a situation analogous to slavery only when a person performed forced labor in complete private confinement. This issue was solved by means of Law no. 10.803, of 2003 (Lei n° 10.803, de 11 de dezembro de 2003), which renewed art. 149 of the Penal Code, which deferred in its substratum a more direct language, besides including a prison sentence of 2 to 8 years and a fine for those who used this type of human exploitation and degradation of the worker.

Brazil has been considered an international reference on the penal issue for having protective measures against this type of human exploitation for at least two centuries. Still, we are not free from this typification of human exploitation. According to the ILO (2011), slave labor has eight categories: slavery and kidnapping; compulsory participation in public works; coercive recruitment practices in agriculture and remote rural areas; domestic servitude; debt bondage; military-imposed forced labor; trafficking for sexual purposes and economic exploitation; and, finally, prison labor.

Forced labor ends up affecting all population groups and segments: young; old; women; men; immigrants; black; brown; indigenous; white; LGBTQIAP+, among others. However, specifically on the racial, generational, age, and gender issues, sexual exploitation is equated, which outrages female and child/youth bodies much more. According to Silva and Gentil (2022, p. 10), “[...] women and girls are slightly more at risk than men and boys, and represent the vast majority of victims of forced sexual exploitation. Children represent a quarter of all victims; almost half [...] have migrated within their country or across international borders.” In this movement of overexploitation directly linked to forced sex work in Brazil, what draws attention is how gender discriminations combine to victimize poor women and girls, especially non-white ones. According to Neumayer and Soysa (2007, pp. 6-8), “[...] far from being an emancipatory force, globalization and economic discrimination against women go hand in hand [...] the existence of forced labor have feedback effects on a country’s position in a globalized world.” There is heavy investment in this sex market and in the trafficking of women, as it has been very profitable to global capital. In addition, there is a whole globalized system strengthened by the profit from captive labor and also the very low wage earnings for women compared to men.

Thus, slavery cannot be neglected, because, from what we have learned, it was never overcome in Brazil. For Souza (2003, p. 103) “[...] it was the interests organically linked to slavery that made it possible to maintain the unity of the vast Brazilian territory and it was slavery that determined the free Brazilian’s way of life.” Therefore, there is a naturalization of social inequalities, with a racial emphasis on poverty. The Brazilian context corroborates the statement by Crane (2013) that the exploitation of modern slave labor takes place in the face of the availability of groups in situations of social vulnerability, to the extent that they are conditioned to high unemployment, low levels of education, and low political representativeness, as well as is facilitated by the geographical isolation of enterprises that have demeaning practices with their workers. For Crane (2013, p. 13) “[...] the external factors that moderate the incidence of slavery can be classified as conditions related to the industry and the institutional context, encompassing regulatory, normative, and cultural systems, and political, socioeconomic, and geographic factors.” Thus, in the next topic, we will better outline the modern slavery in the country in the last decades. We will point out the divergences and contradictions with the resoluteness of today’s labor laws.

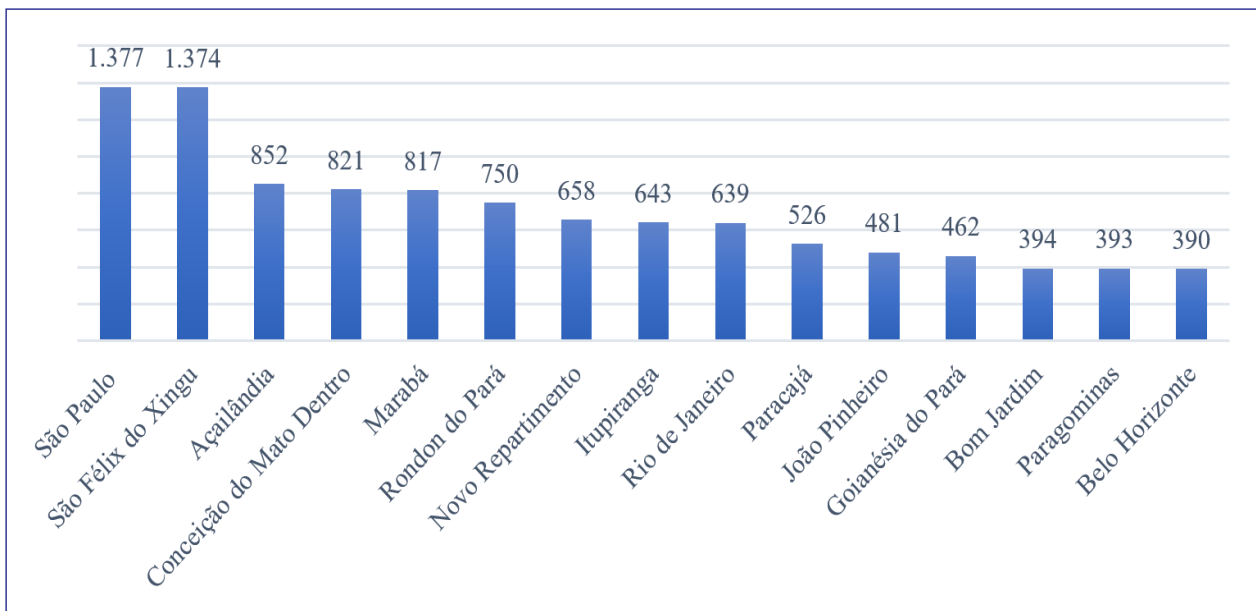
MODERN SLAVERY AND BRAZILIAN LABOR LAWS

In Brazil, the slave labor cycle usually happens at the beginning of the value chain, since the physical force does not require specialization. Its incidence is concentrated in sectors with intensive and unskilled labor, such as agriculture (coffee plantations, sugar cane, grains, and cotton, among others). It also occurs in cattle raising, civil construction, clothing production, textiles, coal, and tree-cutting. We noticed, in this study, that most of the people found in slavery situations come from the Northeast and the North or are immigrants. But something very common among these workers is the fact that they are attracted by false promises of a better life and by the search for better opportunities and jobs. Thus, they are subjugated in the fields or in the cities to perform forced labor and most of the time without any financial return. Regarding labor analogous to slavery in large urban centers, the country has cases of great notoriety and national repercussion such as Lojas Marisa; Lojas Pernambucanas; Zara (from the textile industry) – all three were fined between 2010 and 2014.

We noticed in the sources of the lawsuits that most of the workers were enslaved in the capital and in the interior of São Paulo – in this case, most of them were Bolivian immigrants. Other famous cases include the companies Ambev and Heineken, in 2021; both were fined for slave labor by the outsourcing company: immigrant workers were in slave-like situations at the Sider transport company; in all, the group was composed of twenty-three people. The service provider was sued and fined along with Ambev and Heineken.

For a better comprehension of the present scenario in the states that have the highest concentration of labor analogous to slavery in recent decades, we bring data from Radar SIT (2022) that show the states with the highest concentration of slave labor in the country: São Paulo; Mato Grosso; Pará; Maranhão, and Minas Gerais. This configuration, correspond to the years 1995 to 2002, is illustrated in Graph 1:

Graph 1
Ten municipalities with the most notices of infraction issued between 1995-2022



Source: Elaborated by the authors.

It is important to mention according to the Brazilian Ministry of Labor and Social Security (2022). That the majority of the fines carried out occurred in rural areas as below:

Of the total number of actions, 73% of them occurred in rural areas, a sector that also contributed 87% of the rescues, a percentage very close to those of 2019 and 2020. In the urban area (27% of the actions), 210 workers were rescued in the activities of civil construction, (68 rescues), service sector, specifically in restaurants, (63 rescues), and clothing manufacturing, (39 rescues). In domestic slave labor, 30 people were found by the inspection, in 15 units of the federation, with the largest focus in Bahia (10 cases). Paraíba, Minas Gerais, São Paulo, and Pernambuco had 3 cases each (Ministério do Trabalho e Previdência, 2022).

In dialogue with the present time, in which we have the pandemic situation brought by the new 2019 coronavirus (SARS-Cov-2 and its variants) and highlighting the JHU CSSE COVID-19 studies (Center for Systems Science and Engineering [CSSE], 2022), the year 2022 already exceeds the world mark of 6.31 million deaths. In this scenario, Brazil is currently among the countries in which there were more deaths due to COVID-19. In this context, we understand that during these years of the pandemic, due to the fragility of all health, labor, and safety policies, there has been a recurrence and growth in the number of enslaved workers. We also observed that many businessmen appear consecutively on the “dirty list” of slave labor of the Labor Ministry.

In this way, throughout this research, we seek to understand how the issue of modern slave labor has materialized and taken root, as well as the counterpoint of Brazilian labor legislation. The Consolidation of Labor Laws (CLT), in article 29 (Decreto-lei nº 5.452 de 01 de maio de 1943), mentions that the recognition of the employment relationship and registration in the Work and Social Security Card (CTPS) are mandatory to guarantee the worker's benefits.

In the case of modern slavery, this does not apply, as those who use this type of work ignore these recommendations.

One way to avoid the exploitation and flexibilization of labor is found in the Federal Constitution, in article 7, item XVI, which determines a maximum workday of 8 hours a day, totaling 44 hours a week. Thus, when exceeding this determination, the employer must pay overtime.

In reports published in current journalistic articles and in the cases of fines, we noticed that the working hours exceeded 12 hours a day. And when there is a small remuneration, it does not include time off on weekends, vacations, or payment of the 13th salary. There is also no guarantee of stability and permanence in the job benefiting both the worker and the employer, converging to a contractual security of rights and duties for both parties. Thus, even when there is a breach of pre-established agreements or in cases of accident, or pregnancy, among others, a certain action is already foreseen by law. In the case of modern slave labor, such determinations are ignored, which characterizes a form of exploitation and degradation of the human being.

According to the 7th article of the Brazilian Constitution of 1988, the principle of equality establishes to the worker a guarantee of the payment of a salary corresponding to the service rendered, which is not the case for many Brazilians. There are also legislative issues related to the unhealthiness and danger to which these individuals are exposed. The Brazilian Magna Carta of 1988 mentions in the same article 7th, subsection XXIII, the payment of an additional hazardous and unhealthy rate. Therefore, what characterizes modern slave labor is the lack of, or rather, no guarantee of labor rights for individuals submitted to this form of exploitation. Although slave labor is a crime, it is a profit artifice widely used in the business world. According to the article 149 of the Penal Code (Decreto-lei nº 2.848 de 07 de dezembro de 1940).

Reducing someone to a condition analogous to that of a slave, either by subjecting him to forced labor or exhausting hours, or by subjecting him to degrading working conditions, or by restricting, by any means, his locomotion due to a debt contracted with the employer or representative: (Redaction given by Law No. 10,803, of 11.12.2003)

Penalty - confinement, from two to eight years, and a fine, in addition to the penalty corresponding to the violence. (Redaction given by Law No. 10,803, of 11.12.2003)

§ 1º The same penalties are applicable to those who: (Included by Law No. 10.803, of 11.12.2003)

I - restricts the use of any means of transport by the worker for the purpose of keeping him at his place of work; (Included by Law No. 10.803, of 11.12.2003)

II - Keeping ostensive surveillance in the workplace or taking possession of documents or personal objects of the worker, with the purpose of retaining him/her in the workplace. (Included by Law No. 10.803, of 12.11.2003)

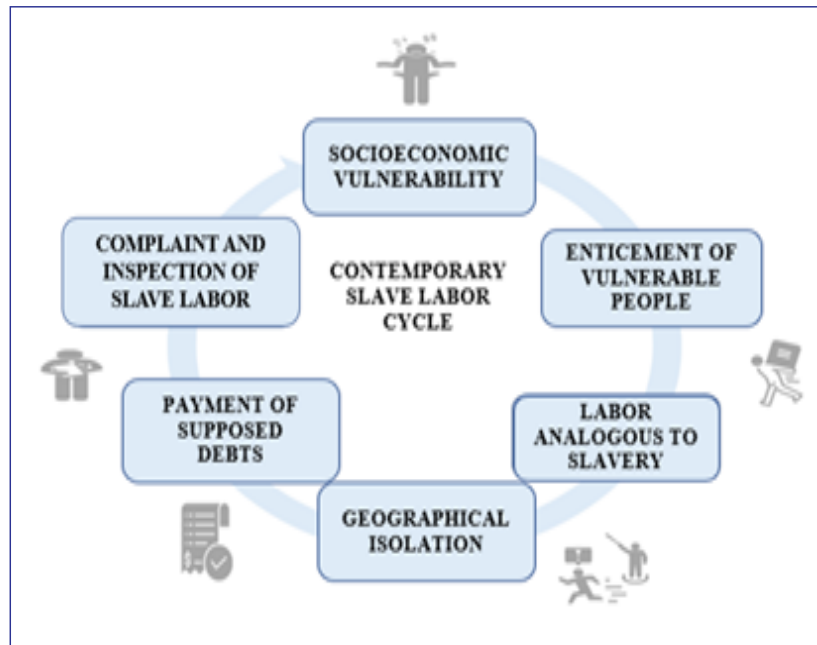
§ 2º The penalty is increased by half if the crime is committed: (Included by Law No. 10,803, of 11.12.2003)

I - against a child or adolescent; (Included by Law No. 10.803, of 11.12.2003)

II - on grounds of race, color, ethnicity, religion, or origin prejudice. (Included by Law No. 10,803, of 11.12.2003)

It is worth pointing out that the term “modern slave labor”, or “contemporary slave labor”, is used to indicate the situation of people who are subjected to forced labor, working days that exceed what is foreseen by law, and debt servitude, among others.

Figure 1
Contemporary slave labor cycle



Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Normally when people are rescued in this form of exploitation, they are usually confined in precarious lodgings, they do not have any type of medical assistance, considering that the activities performed by them are always of high risk. As Girardi, Mello-Théry, Théry, and Hato (2014, p. 4) clarify, “The activities developed by enslaved workers are arduous, associated with degrading conditions, since the workers usually live in shacks or in communal lodgings, whose hygiene conditions are the worst possible.” In this sense, these workers do not have adequate nutrition, access to basic sanitation, or drinking water, they are not assisted by public social policies, have little schooling, and often do not have basic documentation such as birth certificates, general registration, voter registration, and work registration, which compromises their own social reproduction and the exercise of their citizenship. We will see below the cases of mistreatment and profound violence reported and followed up by the labor inspectors.

CAPITALISM AND THE REALITY OF EXPLOITATION OF WORKERS IN SITUATIONS ANALOGOUS TO SLAVERY

In this section, we will discuss journalistic news that report on labor inspection hearings of situations analogous to slavery in Brazil and in other countries. In addition, we analyze the fractures of the capital system, a direct propellant of this mode of exploitation. Modern slave labor brings in its core the issue of precariousness and short and long term damage in the lives of those involved, depending on the environment in which they are exposed, without any rights, surviving adversities and violence, as we will see in the news in this section.

Thus, capitalism is an economic system that is based on the aspect of private goods, acts without restriction, and has freedom of trade and industry with the main objective of acquiring profit. For Felizardo (2017), the prerogative of capitalism is labor power as a commodity undertaken in exchange for a wage. In this analogy, surplus labor time is profitable to capital, known in Marx’s writings (1980) as the law of surplus value. Quickly, capitalism and modern slavery have a strong and intimate relationship. Since “[...] labor power is only purchased because the labor, which it can perform and is obliged to perform, is

greater than the labor required to reproduce labor power, and is therefore of greater value than the value of labor power” (Marx, 1980, p. 393). Thus, it is a consignment of the mode of production that this extraction of value, this expropriation, takes place in a constant and increasing manner.

In the light of Marx’s thought (1980), we will report the specificity of labor in Brazil, highlighting the reality from the labor reform of 2017, in Michel Temer’s government, the extinction of the Ministry of Labor in 2019, on the first day of President Jair Messias Bolsonaro’s government, who subsequently recreated, in 2021, the Ministry of Labor and Social Security, marking in a counterproductive way the labor legal apparatuses in Brazil. Apparently, such interference served the interests of financial and speculative capital, since it demobilized and weakened its own regulation agencies, removing from the labor auditors the power of inspection, which generated legal insecurity and weakened the national labor system. The transgression of regulatory norms led to the subjection of workers to a situation of overexploitation and undignified work, curbing the years of progress that the country had previously had.

We shall see the news from G1 Sul de Minas (2021) about the rescue that took place between July 13 and 20, 2021. The operation was carried out by the Federal Highway Police, labor inspectors, and the Labor Public Ministry in a farm in Boa Esperança (MG) and two in Ilícinea (MG). According to the report, the victims were originally from the state of Bahia. They had to pay all the expenses until they arrived at their respective workplaces. They were in a situation analogous to slavery, with exhausting working days and in degrading conditions. It is worth mentioning that an adolescent girl was found picking coffee. After the tax audit, the employers paid the severance dues owed to the workers. R\$396,805.12 were paid, as well as a guarantee to return the workers to their places of origin in the state of Bahia. According to Garcia (2021), “[...] 82% of those rescued from slave labor in Brazil are black.” This shows that, still in the 21st century, racial issues are closely linked to social and economic inequalities. Even with the conjunctural, historical, political, and sociological differences, the presence of the coffee settlement as the basic source of contemporary slavery is notorious. Brazil is an agrarian cradle, and this is noticeable in the data provided by the Ministry of Labor, since a large part of the workers rescued in this mode of exploitation are performing their tasks on large farms.

The article of Isto é Dinheiro, in 2021, exposes the rescue of a domestic worker who was in a situation of modern slavery in São José dos Campos, in Vale do Paraíba, interior of São Paulo. Subjected to this condition of exploitation from 13 to 46 years old, she was only freed in June 2021 due to anonymous complaints; her ex-employer was arrested in the act: “[...] the worker suffered restrictions on her freedom and was kept from having any social interaction [...] Her work day did not allow time off: she worked from Monday to Sunday” (Isto é Dinheiro, 2021). Here we see how the modern slavery system also reaches domestic work. In recent years, domestic work appears increasingly, although it is more difficult to identify because of its links to the slave family. Such exploitation is camouflaged in relationships of supposed affection and inclusion in the family cycle.

Finally, we highlight the report on the Repórter Brasil website with the title: “Enslaved farm worker lived with his family among scorpions and dust”:

The precarious house, in which only one person could fit, was less than 100 meters from a mining company neighboring the farm and 200 meters from the limestone extraction site. The production, which was noisy day and night, raised a cloud of white dust that covered food, clothes, and people. “The amount of dust was impressive,” says Andréia Donin, a tax auditor and coordinator of the operation. The couple’s 14-year-old daughter has asthmatic bronchitis and suffered from the intense dust – the other children are 16, 8, 7, and 4 (Sakamoto, 2021).

The account in this story is remarkable, because this man lived with his wife and five children in Formosa (GO), sleeping among snakes and scorpions, without water, without light, with little food and under the dust of the limestone mining that was close to his lodging. His little food was exposed to the sun and the dust from the limestone mining. He worked for 8 years for his employer together with his family. The worker, in this case, was paid R\$50.00 per day, without a signed work contract.

All these recent events show that our country is not adopting an efficient methodology to face the problem and eradicate modern slave labor, which continues to attack human dignity and violate labor rights.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

We decided to discuss the relationship between capitalism and modern slavery, since we noted in this study that it has constituted the essence of exploitation in a globalized model of capital. It is worth pointing out that slaves are not and have never been synonymous of black people, although the racial clipping is an important ingredient to understand and analyze the Brazilian context.

We emphasize that a person enslaved in modern times has been an accessible, cheap, and still very common resource, with the aggravating factor that such dehumanizing forms of exploitation and violence have never been interrupted in the country. Even after the abolition, we find nowadays a new form of slavery, to which any person living in misery or on the margins of society is subjected, that is, has a great potential to be a modern slave. Thus, there are factors such as racial, gender, generational, and age issues that must be investigated and deepened under the dimensions of slave-like labor in the business world and in Management studies.

Referring to the labor legislation and the reality experienced by many workers, we have tried to propose a quick overview of the legislation in the context of the social panorama experienced in Brazil. We noticed, in this quadrant, the fragility of our laws in eradicating modern slave labor. The recommended laws are not enforced, and their jurisprudence is increasingly weakened, making workers easy preys for large landowners, businessmen, among others, who circumvent the legislation in order to obtain cheap labor. According to the ILO (2020), the problems of exploitation, overexploitation, unemployment, underemployment, inequality, and labor precarization are getting worse, instead of being solved. Moreover, there is a demeaning process of inequality, since these modern businessmen and slavers are hardly ever arrested, even when they are caught in the act. The laws are still favorable to such criminals, since they settle with the Labor Court by paying the compensation and fines of their lawsuits. Besides, the rural areas appear as recurrent modern slavery practices according to the Radar SIT (2022).

We also highlight that the relationship between capitalism and modern slavery is quite complex, since the first, the economic model, is closely related to the second, a global mode of exploitation. In the case of peripheral countries like Brazil, the hardships of inequality and socioeconomic vulnerability become more evident at the center of this process. Therefore, to promote the eradication of slave labor, it is necessary to activate inclusive public policies and legal procedures that adopt and guarantee an effective form of labor inspection and a State that provides a fairer life for its workers, allowing them ample access to health, social assistance, food, education, and work, thus guaranteeing a dignified life, far from the perpetuation of cycles of exploitation that predominate and structure the capitalist model.

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