



**FEMALE WORK AND PRECARIOUSNESS: THE CASE OF COSMETICS
CONSULTANTS IN THE AGRESTE OF PERNAMBUCO, BRAZIL**

**TRABALHO FEMININO E PRECARIIDADE: O CASO DE CONSULTORAS DE
COSMÉTICOS NO AGRESTE DE PERNAMBUCO, BRASIL**

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Abstract

The present study aims to analyze the working set-up performed by cosmetic consultants of Direct Selling System (DSS) in Brazil. For the production of this work, research with a qualitative approach and exploratory character was carried through semi-structured interviews, and for the analysis of the obtained data, we used the content analysis. As a result, there is a lack of labour rights and the existing precarious work performed by women consultants. The existence of flexible forms of work are characteristics of this activity, where there is pressure to sell excessively and frequently, to pay off purchases on time, and to have a quality service offered by the consultants, making them the main responsible for conducting their business,

and this activity sadly reveals the lack of assistance from the company in which those women provide services.

Keywords: Cosmetics Consultants. Female work. Precariousness. Informality. Flexibilization.

Resumo

O presente estudo tem como objetivo analisar a configuração do trabalho desempenhado por consultoras de cosméticos do Sistema de Vendas Diretas (DSS) no Brasil. Para a produção deste trabalho, foi realizada uma entrevista semiestruturada, com abordagem qualitativa e caráter exploratório, e para a análise dos dados obtidos foi utilizada a análise de conteúdo. Como resultado, há a falta de direitos trabalhistas e o trabalho precário existente desempenhado pelas consultoras. A existência de formas flexíveis de trabalho são características dessa atividade, onde há pressão por vendas excessivas e frequentes, pagamentos de compras até o vencimento e qualidade de serviço dos consultores, tornando-os os principais responsáveis pela condução dos negócios, e essa atividade marcada pela falta de assistência da empresa em que prestam serviços.

Palavras-chave: Consultores de cosméticos. Trabalho feminino. Precariância. Informalidade. Flexibilização

1. Introduction

During the 1980s, there was a decline in essentially capitalist wage work. And these and other changes were from the restructuring of capitalism and the crisis of the economy, leading to an increase in numbers of the unemployed and the search for occupations in the informal sector, having strong deregulation of the labour market (Araújo, 2011).

Examples of these unregulated forms of work are the Direct Selling System (DSS) sales, the term which recognizes by law to the placement of products through retailers. The work performed by female resellers in this direct selling system is marked by the lack of social guarantees and can be seen as a consequence of the “economic imperatives” which trigger precarious forms of work (Abílio, 2014). For this author, the consultants have not got social recognition as workers, as well any guaranteed security and protectionist measures, for instance, health insurance, retirement for the length of service, among other benefits.

Thus, we established the following research question: How to set up the work of cosmetic consultants in the Direct Selling System in Agreste of Pernambuco (region of the scrubland of Pernambuco, Brazil)? To answer this question, we draw as specific aims: To characterize the profile of the cosmetic consultants from Agreste of Pernambuco; Identify the specificity of the cosmetics sales labour, through the Direct Selling System, from the consultants' speeches; Analyze the female work of cosmetic consultants; to discuss the existing precarious work of the previously cited women group.

The Agreste region background was chosen because it is a place where one of the largest textile centres in Brazil had developed, and which historically has not followed the industrialization patterns common to the rest of the country (Pereira & Vêras de Oliveira, 2013; Sá, 2018). In this region, with high rates of economic growth, production is largely informal, made up of household workers, and the work dynamics and trade are quite particular (Sá, 2017; 2018).

Activities such as the sale of cosmetics and others not directly related to the confection, developed in this locality, follow, to some extent, the peculiar dynamics of the business done in Agreste of Pernambuco. Therefore, the importance of delimiting the region. All cosmetics resellers (or consultants), interviewed in this survey, work in one of the largest companies in the Direct Selling System, called Mother Nature Cosmetics (MNC). The company in question has operations in several countries, hierarchy among consultants, reward systems and high flexibility of working hours of its resellers.

We believe that this study is relevant for the identification of the reality of the work performed by women cosmetic consultants in the Agreste of Pernambuco, considering the pertinent characteristics of this form of work. It is also relevant for cosmetic consultants, as it offers a critical way to visualize their profession, leading to know the various faces that configure this activity. Through this research, we seek, in general, to question the working conditions of cosmetic consultants, and also to glimpse forms of remuneration consistent with the work performed by them.

2. Work and precariousness

The working hours up to the year 1970 were characterized by standardization measures and regulations, being these measures created and applied primarily by the state and after World War II, carried out by the joint work agreements. In this sense, in several countries, especially developed countries, the reduction in annual working hours has been guaranteed (Dedecca, 2004).

After the 1970s, Boltanski and Chiapello (2009) understand that a "restructuring of world capitalism" begins, characterized by the exchange of forms of investment, being carried out in financial capital and leaving aside industrial investments and those related to social welfare. The authors believe that these changes were due to the elevation of the "merger-acquisition" processes of large multinational corporations and the circulation of the financial markets themselves, with the government apparatus, through incentives for the increasing use of flexible working forms, a new form for making profits.

Harvey (1989) notes that during this period, there was an increase in the control of bosses over the workforce without coalescence of syndicates because this category was losing its power. As a result, structural unemployment has increased, requiring the use of flexible hiring modes, triggering flexible accumulation, publicly supported, marked by the use of subcontracted, temporary and part-time work.

Work, considered a social institution, suffered, therefore, several attacks, among them: those developed by the new forms of technology, such as the sudden replacement of the workforce of man by machines capable of carrying out the production processes effectively; neoliberalism was also considered an attack on work, characterized by the decline of social security as well as its regulations; and finally, the demands and modifications of the productive arrangements, which increasingly demanded the training of workers and the flexibility of the whole process (Bendassolli, 2007).

In the Marxist view explored by Gounet (1999), with the crisis of Fordism and the rise of American power, Toyotism emerges as a reaction of the institutions of Japan, presenting as characteristics: the forms of production leveraged according to the quantity demanded; the search for the reduction of waste; the use of flexible productive means and adaptable to the production changes that trigger a supple work organization, because of the collection by skilled workers who dominate various activities and are inserted in this process through subcontracts, the employer denies the offer of labour guarantees to the latter simply because of the outsourcing.

Véras de Oliveira (2011) points out that in the flexibilization of work, which encompasses the configuration of the workday and the activities to be performed, it is evidenced a separation between the workers who perform their activities temporarily and those who work fully. The workers that work temporarily are targets of precarious remuneration and subject to lack of guarantee due to their permanence in the position.

Given the work flexibility and the use of outsourcing processes pointed out by Araújo (2011), companies began to use them as tools capable of increasing production yields and

financial returns and minimizing their costs, contributing to accumulation. Thus triggering the precariousness of work relations, marked by the use of new procedures and the intensification of the workforce, the latter being formed mostly by women and workers excluded from the formal sector. Social security is also affected, promoting work relations without concrete definitions in respect of working hours, which become bigger and in accordance with business requirements, as well as the reduction of salaries offered to workers (Araújo, 2011).

3. Female Work

Albornoz (2008) indicates as one of the first predominantly female works, the agriculture, assuming that women collaborated with this process, as a way of facing the nomadism of the villages that lived from hunting. Pregnant women, or even with newborn children, may have refused invitations to leave and settled in certain places. The families began to remove from agriculture what was necessary for their survival, and together with the work of planting emerged notions of property and too much produce that could be stocked and not consumed immediately.

According to Bruschini and Rosemberg (1982), the Industrial Revolution triggered the division of work into two different fields: the domestic unit and the production unit. Bruschini and Ricoldi (2009) also point out that numerous studies demonstrate a constant generalization of the sexual division of labor, where men are directed to production-oriented services, as a source of income and outside the family environment, not the same with women, because for them, are meant for domestic nature activities, which includes the daily tasks of organizing and cleaning the house, to education, food, health and leisure of children and all who are part of the Family. To Kergoat (2009, p. 67) "the sexual division of labor is the form of division of social work resulting from the social relations of sex".

Hirata and Kergoat (2007) highlight in their studies some models of insertion of women in the labour market, among them, stand out: the "traditional model", in which the woman assumes the entirely domestic role in the family and the man receives the attribution the "provider role", where he must perform paid work outside the home for family support; the "conciliation model", in which it is up to women to seek the reconciliation of their professional and family life; the "complementarity model", in which women continue to develop functions considered feminine in the work Market; the "delegation" model, which emerged as an emergency way to add or even replace the "reconciliation model" of a French family and professional life. The emergence of this model configures the increase of women's entry into professions with higher educational requirements, such as the executive, being able to delegate

to other women family and domestic activities, because they have the financial means and have the need to carry out this delegation (Hakim, 1996 apud Hirata & Kergoat, 2007).

It also considered that this sexual division of labour is configured as the division of social work resulting from social relations between the sexes. Thus, Hirata and Kergoat (2007) also say that such a particular way of the social division of work has two principles that are part of their organization: the principle of separation, which makes possible the existence of jobs aimed at men and women, and the hierarchical principle, which overlaps a greater value for men's work than women's work. These principles are valid for all known societies, in space and time. The family organization is according to the logic that domestic activities and the small children's education rely only on the women, while men follow assigned to work outside the home. However, it is not clear why this sexual division proceeds articulated in this way, let alone the reasons that make these relations unequal (Scott, 1995).

Thus, Dedecca (2004) points out that the great inequality between the time used between men and women comes from this increase in female accountability. Even though there is a decrease in working hours away from home, women have, in total, a working day relatively larger than men. Even when there is a considerable increase in female insertion as an active workforce in the market, there is no decrease in the domestic activities that are destined for them, which means that there is a double workday performed by them, which besides to perform tasks in the work market, that is, with work hours equal to men, do the household chores in their free time (Dedecca, 2004; Ávila & Ferreira, 2014; Santos, 2019).

Bruschini (2007) reports that there have been changes in culture and social values, which have modified and increased women's demand for wage work. Taking into view the search for better working conditions, they began to enter on a large scale in schools and academies and featuring female workers of great skill, as well as the growth of the same in various functions in the work market.

For Bruschini (1994) poverty was an important cause for women's insertion in the work market in the seventies, but this was not the only reason. The decrease in fertility, the growth in school level, the search for a more differentiated consumption, among other factors, are considered causes of similar value that explain this movement (Ávila & Ferreira, 2014).

The reasons that led women to look for university courses, highlighted by Bruschini and Lombardi (1999), are the existence of a major change in culture from the political and social movements in the late 1960s and especially in 1970s in which was perceived among women the desire for professional qualification through higher education, the latter being an objective for their lives, not just restricted to domestic service. Thus, universities had a significant

increase in the number of new students, and women began to occupy professions hitherto occupied by men, making female professionalization wider, away from the “traditional guts”. To Alves e Corrêa (2009, p. 141) “the effects of education on women's empowerment are manifested in varied forms, even by increasing the potential for income generation, the autonomy in personal decisions and control over their own fertility and greater participation in public life”.

Moreover, it is noticeable that there is a large gender pay gap (Madalozzo, 2008), “[...] in Pernambuco, almost 100% of women reach up to one minimum wage and always, in all states, men earn more than women” (Brito, 1994, p. 137). In research carried out comparing the south and northeast regions, it was observed that in the northeastern:

Despite the absorption of female labour in the commerce and services sectors, in these sectors, there is sexual discrimination of income. As for the agriculture and industry sectors, women are discriminated twice as much, both in terms of insertion and income, and the situation is intensifying in the industrial sector. Between regions, there is less gender discrimination in the Northeast, and even less when observed among individuals of brown or black skin colour, which indicates that the differences in wages and gender discrimination tend to be less in less developed regions economically (Gomes & Souza, 2018, p. 27).

Given this observation by Gomes and Souza (2018), it is important to highlight that the disadvantages suffered by women are not homogeneous or stem only from gender prejudice, but from the intersection between different systems of oppression, related to gender, class, race, sexuality, location etc. (Hirata, 2014). In this way, the inequalities suffered by different women are also diverse, making it possible to notice, for example, that black woman in Brazil assume more positions in precarious Jobs, and receive lower salaries than White woman and black men (Ribeiro, 2017) or whereas poor women in India are victims of the most diverse violence in public spaces (Crenshaw, 2002).

In a nutshell, Bruschini and Lombardi (1999) exemplify that even though they have reached prestigious workspaces with similar forms of insertion in relation to men, women continue to fight for their rights, where wage differences are only the most obvious forms of discrimination, and there are more subtle ones (Madalozzo, 2008).

Abílio (2014), by conducting a research on the activity of cosmetic consultants, inserted in the Direct Sales System, was able to identify some socioeconomic profiles of the consultants and heterogeneity regarding the way they recognize themselves within the business. Cosmetic companies, for one of those interviewed by Abílio (2014), sought the quality of their sales force, but nowadays they value the quantity, without requiring even the consultants to be literate. The

intense increase in the number of consultants has drastically hit their profits, and their quality of life has also decreased, as their activity was marked by intense work, day and night, with “Monday to Monday” days” to serve their customers.

Because she has no employment relationship with the company, she has no right if she chooses to terminate her 20-year activities as a consultant, as she is an informal worker, not registered as a self-employed person, the termination of activities in any of the companies will only correspond to more a registration disabled, without causing great damage to the company that every day counts on the entry of countless consultants starting the activities (Abílio, 2014).

Abílio (2014) also draws attention to the number of more than 1 million women registered in the company, however, she realizes, given the interviewees' statements, that this number is much higher, as there is the “reseller of the reseller”, which is characterized as women who are not registered with the company, because they are afraid of taking responsibility for sales and debts, so they look for a registered consultant who, in most cases, will give up 20% of their profit to pay your dealer, leaving only 10% of that margin. This way of working with resellers is well accepted by the consultants, as they promote the exit of their products in stock and the achievement of the score required by the company to submit orders. Analyzing the strategies adopted by the consultants, the personal and private agreements are evidenced, in which the logics used are spread and combined by different social classes and work forms.

Abílio (2014) describes the "work out of work" of resellers. It is known that there are no "prerequisites or methods" to perform resale, the regulations only exist within the factory, bringing the view that the company is fully supported by the “amateur work” and without predestination, making evident the lack of recognition on the part of the consultants as their workers. In the following chapter, we will present how this study was conducted, as well as the methodological tools we use.

4. Methodological Procedures

The procedure used in this study for data collection was the semi-structured interview, which, for Gil (2002), admits a partially structured script. In this sense, it was necessary, for the interviews, the direct contact with some consultants who are involved in the activities coming from the cosmetics resellers, in the Direct Sales System. Through prior knowledge of the interviewees, it was possible to contact them through telephone calls, messages through the application and the Internet, and even home visits to set the days and times for the fulfilment of the interviews.

The criteria used to choose the interviewees were: proper registration with the cosmetics company (whose fictitious name adopted in this research is Mother Nature Cosmetics - MNC); the amount of time they have with cosmetics resellers through direct sales; reside in the Agreste of Pernambuco.

Eleven women who have between four and thirty years of working with resellers were interviewed. Through this choice, we seek knowledge of their perceptions of the dynamism that exists in the company in which they provide services, given the numerous changes that have occurred over the years in which they remain resellers.

All women live in the Northern Agreste of Pernambuco, in the town of Vertentes. Some of them live in rural areas, so it was possible to have a broader view of how these consultants carried out their activities in different locations of the municipality. The interviews lasted between 11 minutes and 32 seconds (shorter duration) and 54 minutes and 21 seconds (longer duration). The interviews occurred on the 9th, 10th and 11th of November, 2017. The interview locations were the interviewees' houses and their environments.

Their voices were captured with recorder and later transcribed. The eleven women, who agreed to participate in the interviews and authorized such recordings procedures, were reassured with full guarantee of secrecy and non-disclosure of their names and audio interviews, being aware and informed in advance of the interviews academic nature. All signed an informed consent form. In this research, we performed a thematic analysis of the content, working with two categories of analysis: female work and precariousness. For each category, different objects were considered as sub-them

We seek to follow Minayos (2007) proposal for thematic content analysis. At first, the pre-analysis of the transcribed material was performed through a “floating reading”. Thus, we were able to construct the corpus, selecting all the lines that could be relevant to the proposed discussion. After this stage, we organized the content contained in the statements of the respondents to, finally, perform the interpretation of the results obtained, at which time it is possible to propose deductions about the theory used in the study, making the relationship between them. In the next chapter, we will present an analysis of the research results.

5. The presentation and analysis of results

5.1 Works Characterization

The interviewed consultants were between 39 and 66 years old and most of them are married, living with their husbands and children. The total number of women interviewed, only three were comprehended as autonomous cosmetic resellers and even these three, only one takes

that as a profession, too, the crafts. The other interviewees did not declare reselling as a profession, even though they were dedicating themselves this work for a considerable period of days.

Reasons that led the interviewees to become consultants are the most diverse, highlighting their pursuit of financial independence, as well as a way to not only have their husbands as providers of household financial resources. It is also a way of them helping in the household expenses and to the purchase of goods and services for themselves.

In the consultants' reports, it was quite common to hear that they are not only resellers of branded products but also consume them because they believe that when they buy a product and use it, it facilitates their sales activity since when they are consumers they will know fact the product and will pass more security and credibility to its customers.

It is important to note that the company does not make the products available for free for the use of consultants, nor does it offer demonstration products. It offers only a few free samples of products being launched in the market. Some consultants said that the samples available are insufficient, as they purchase products on their own to work with demonstrations and thus increase their sales, as this is a differential.

Besides, some of them said that they stay in business because they will always need products for their own and family use, so as consultants, they will have the “advantage” of having the discount to buy products they frequently use.

The heterogeneity of their recognition as consultants is perceived, as well as the most varied socioeconomic profiles, as Abílio (2014) found in their studies. Even before starting the interview, Interviewee 11, in an informal conversation, said she did not understand the reason why she was chosen to participate in the study, even having 30 years of activity as a consultant, because according to her, she considers herself a “fake consultant”, since she does not live on resale and does not dedicate to this activity, but yes, to the shop that she owns along with her husband and the public office she occupies. Reports such as these contrast sharply with the statements of some of the interviewees who only have the activity of consultant as a source of income and consider themselves resellers, because it is from this activity that they derive their livelihood.

Throughout the interview with Interviewee 11, who sees herself as a “fake consultant”, she noticed the numerous responsibilities she has in this activity, ranging from choosing the products, as the interviewee buys them and exposes them in your store, the service to your customers who usually go there to make their purchases, until the separation of the goods when

it arrives, the distribution and payment of the tickets from the purchase. Even performing these activities, she does not recognize herself as a cosmetic consultant.

When asking one of the interviewees if she considers cosmetic resellers her job, the following answer was given:

No, because it never gave me [profit], I always worked with it and never had [...] an advantage, I always had, in fact, loss. I've lived a lifetime of sales and never seen, never made a profit, because the profit was always what I had to pay. I am 30 years old, when I started I was 13 years old, selling [in another company], I didn't even sell to myself, I sold for a cousin after that it became a habit, and later an addiction, until today I sell and see no future. [smiles wryly] And the worst is we don't let it go, I keep something with no future, no future (Interviewee 4, 43 years old, teacher).

Interviewee 4 also does not consider herself a cosmetic consultant, precisely because she does not have a good income with resellers, even having more tasks than Interviewee 11, because despite having the same uptime, Interviewee 4 still has the job of going to your customers to resell, in addition to the other activities you should perform as a cosmetic consultant.

Abilio (2014) says that the quality of life of consultants is quite affected, given the intense working hours to which they are subject to the customer service, as shown in the following passage:

It could [be better] if I had a space like this, it's because I walk a lot, my store is practically my back, I walk with a lot of weight and God willing, one day, when things get better I want to stop a little longer at home to put my work, which is a lot that I can not walk with crochet bedspread, with crochet hat on the coast then I will die. Then a perfume, a magazine, a small product like that can take, but not much, but this is my difficulty, that I wanted to stop for a while, that I have been walking for a long time (Interviewee 2, 58 years old, independent saleswoman cosmetics and artisan).

The interviewee shows her physical fatigue from resellers, because she has no alternative to work other than that, with a "shop in the back". She needs to bring the products to her customers, even distant, because she has no means of transport to help her get around, and she has been doing this activity for 18 years, which has led to her physical wear and tear over time. So that at the moment, your main desire is to "stop for a while" and create your fixed point.

In contrast, Interviewee 7 was very pleased with her work as a consultant, stating that this activity has improved her quality of life, helping her cure a very common psychological illness in the current century, but it is important to note that Interviewee 7, unlike Interviewee 2 mentioned above, she is nineteen years younger than her last and has only five years of activity as a consultant, while Interviewee 2 has eighteen years working with resellers. Besides, Interviewee 7 has a fixed point in her home, where it receives the customers, having a small number of customers to attend at home, different from Interviewee 2. Making a profit through resellers is one of the main reasons for driving the work of cosmetic consultants. However, many of these professionals state in interviews that discounts are sometimes insufficient which corroborates what Abílio (2014) found in her studies.

One point that caught our attention was the existence of numerous reports from the consultants saying that they do not feel recognition by the company they provide their services to, corroborating Abílio (2014). This is evident in the speech of Interviewee 3 (49 years old, farmer), reporting that the only way the company uses to relate to her is through meeting invitations, which she says don't have time to go and that such a company does not recognize it or give it away when her sales are high. According to this interviewee, apart from a 30% discount, the company offers nothing more as a way of recognition and should pay more attention because she says she is not satisfied with this form of relationship.

For Interviewee 5 (46 years old, Repositor), the only way the company can relate to her is through the leader, who plays her closest support role when the consultant needs it, however, Interviewee 5 says that want to have more support, communication, and contact with the company's management, which, according to her, is nonexistent. This lack of recognition by the company was also evidenced in the following statement:

Because you don't have access to the company, [...] the only thing you get when you [pay] some late account is billing ... You don't get complimented on your sales for the fact that If you have reached a higher goal this month, you do not see a compliment [...] from someone, from a boss, from someone responsible for the company, giving you more support to continue at that level (Interviewee 4, 43 years old, teacher).

This consultant's speech closely resembles reports from several of them, who lack recognition of their efforts to maintain their sales every month, to meet their payment obligations and to remain active in their activities. Many of them find it difficult to obtain help and answering questions by the company, which can be observed in speech d to Interviewed 6,

which told of the difficulty facing when you want a piece of information by telephone of the MNC. As she does not have a landline at home, and this type of call can only be made by landlines rather than mobile phones, it is inaccessible for her to contact the company through calls.

The lack of recognition by the direct sales company, directed to consultants, made MNC create various ways to reward them for their performance, as Abílio (2014) pointed out, such as offering trophies, trips, parties, and jewellery. However, most consultants who lack personal recognition from the company also do not see these incentives through prizes as interesting, as many of them have never won a "toast" for their good performance with resellers.

It is well known that the number of resellers registered in the direct sales companies of cosmetics grows every day. Thus, we seek to know, through the statements of the consulted consultants, how they relate to their competitors. Most of them reported having no problem with the other resellers, phrases such as "No [problem], the sun was born for everyone" (Interviewee 1, 54 years old, farmer) were common in the statements of the consultants.

Interviewee 7 (39 years old, a freelance cosmetics saleswoman) said she saw other resellers "friendly" and not "competing" because she used them as a strategy to get products she didn't have as a quick way to serve your last-minute customers who couldn't wait for orders to arrive. Also, this consultant reported that she has differential compared to others, because it prized for making more differentiated and careful packaging, always prizing for good service so that their customers could always come back to her.

However, some of them say that the large number of people reselling hinders their sales performance because, for Interviewee 5 (46 years, repository) her place is full of people selling, there are fewer customers to acquire the products. As another consultant: "Some ... [laughs] get along with us, others ignore. [laughs] There are some who do [hinder], put a lower price, although they earn nothing" (Interviewee 6, 40 years, cosmetics salesperson). It can be seen that MNC has no control over the prices being practiced by its resellers because some do not even have the notion of their profit, they sell the products for the values they have acquired, only to sell, without earning anything, as the interviewee highlighted.

These speeches confirm what Abílio (2014) found in her research, which companies currently value for the quantity and not the quality of their sales force, not even charging their literacy. This constant search for increased consultants is common in direct sales, some companies even encourage their consultants to refer more people to join the business.

For Interviewee 4, the company only requires the constant increase in sales, as she describes in the following passage: " [requirement] from profit, which it [the company] always

wants me to sell more, it's always wanting me to sell more, never okay satisfied with what I'm doing, always wants more” (Interviewee 4, 43 years old, teacher).

The existence of the “reseller of reseller” pointed out by Abílio (2014) could be observed in most of the consultants' reports. Thus, the mark of more than 1 million women registered in the company is relatively larger, since few of the women interviewed do not have a reseller if they do not have it, they already had it in previous moments and those who do not have it. , made clear the desire to have someone to help them with resellers.

The reasons why these resellers are interested in other resellers were shown in the speeches of the consultants who already have this aid. They confess that they like to have this help because it is possible to set up order more easily, and it is not necessary to order complimentary products just to reach the minimum order value, also assisting in the resale of stocked products of the registered consultants, who said they also make available the products they have at home or in their work environment, so that their resellers try to sell, ensuring a higher output of these products and avoiding the loss of them due to expiration dates.

Two of the interviewees, namely Interviewee 3 (49 years old, farmer) and Interviewee 4 (43 years old, teacher), say they receive their daughters' help to resell the products. In the first case, the interviewee said that her teenage daughter takes the magazine to school to show her classmates, and the latter confessed that her eldest daughter started helping her early, at about the age of seven or eight, also taking the magazine to school to show the teachers. Both claim to offer the full profit they receive for their daughters, without a division in this regard. And they also said that their daughters also help to order, sorting, delivery and receiving, so there is a division of tasks between them.

When we questioned why “reseller of resellers” did not register with the company, the registered consultants said that they fear to take on greater responsibility, offering their “names”, committing to maintain activity and volume required by the company and still have to take on debt if someone does not pay for what they bought. So they prefer to keep their “few” sales this way, a kind of informality within the informality they prefer to keep, making the company profit even more in this way.

Not long ago, the MNC passed by changes in the way it operates, especially in terms of incentives for consultants. The consultants who noticed this recent change in the company's system have shown several points of view about this fact, highlighting the disapproval of many of them, because they did not like this increasing demand to increase sales, placing their profit margins at stake if they fall level. For Interviewee 6 (40 years old, cosmetics salesperson), who reached the gold level and increased her percentage to 32%, this change was positive in this

respect, having increased her profit, but negative because she felt pressed to stay in it, not fall in level and thus receive less for sales.

Looking at this scenario of changes we can observe what was said by Neves (2004), highlighting in their studies the innumerable changes that emerged in response to technological advances, thus contributing to the emergence of new ways of the precarious working class. Through the speeches of the consultants, it was possible to see how much these changes increased the precariousness of their activities, always keeping them under pressure to increase sales, blaming them for the fact that they are receiving a certain range of profit.

The responsibility of women resellers is present in all their work, being solely their responsibility to pay the debts of the orders since when they register, they make available their names and information from their documents. The resellers interviewed were aware of their responsibility and most of them confessed to having had payment problems.

There are many stories told by them about the "defaults", "losses" and "bail" they had to go through, causing them to look for ways to pay the outstanding amounts for the default of customers. Interviewee 3 (49 years old, farmer), for example, confessed that she has a plan to stop sales, as many customers do not pay right and she always has to deploy to make payments on time because the company blocks your new orders if you have any outstanding debt.

This increased personal accountability is quoted by Bendassolli (2007), to assert that individuals are put in different situations of uncertainty and responsibilities, and of their obligation to choose the way they want to act and conduct their business. According to Interviewed 4 (43 years old, teacher), his name has been negated for the late payment of slips. And it was delayed because he had not received the values of customers and had nowhere to withdraw, therefore, other respondents highlight the importance of having "working capital" to be used in emergencies like this.

The female responsibility for the debts is seen in the following statement: "I take it out of my pocket and my profit and pay, then they [the customers] pay me. [Already lost] A lot! About [R\$]2.000 or more, in this range. Hardly [there is a return of money]" (Interviewee 6, 40 years old, cosmetics saleswoman

5.2 The Female Work of Cosmetics Consultants

We seek to know the levels of schooling and professional training of the interviewed resellers, and we find that, among the total of eleven women participants, six have completed high school, four women did not conclude elementary school, only one of the interviewees stated that she was finishing a degree in social science, in the course of Social Service.

When we also investigated the professions of the interviewees, we noticed that most of the consultants are in segments that commonly have female participation, such as agriculture, cosmetics sales, handicrafts, education, and commerce. Thus, what is described by Hakim (1996, apud Hirata and Kergoat, 2007), confirming that women continue to enter into functions considered female in the work market, following the “complementarity model”.

Unemployment is one of the causes that led some women interviewed to enter in direct sales of cosmetics, seeing in this activity a possibility to earn their income. However, this activity is understood as an emergency way found to not to be out of work, given that companies in the Direct Sales System do not offer any employment bond, therefore, they do not sign the workbooks of their resellers. This scenario configures what Harvey (1989) observed, that, facing rising unemployment, it is up to workers to seek new forms of work and skills, forcing them to fit into flexible modes of production, thus increasing the precariousness of work relations.

In addition, this situation demonstrates that work as a cosmetic consultant is sometimes sought after by women who are poorer classes, revealing that the articulation or intersection (Crenshaw, 2002; Hirata, 2014) between gender and class, in these cases, can lead to situations of social vulnerability, marked by underemployment, with little or no social guarantee, low wages, double working hours, etc., as shown below.

Women, in particular, have a growing social burden with regard to domestic and family care activities, which includes raising children, preparing food for the family, and even caring for older people, when necessary, all this without receiving any amount. Men are provided with services outside the home to obtain wages, maintaining what Bruschini and Rosemberg (1982) and Bruschini and Ricoldi (2009) describe as the “sexual division of work”.

The resellers interviewed described this division as normal in their families, and it was up to them to do this work. Of the eleven women, only one reported that she has the help of her husband in domestic activities in an equal manner in his home. One of the interviewees even said that she has a “girl” who helps her at home, to whom she has delegated the duties that would normally be exclusively for her to do.

Women who perform household activities have no social or financial recognition. It is what Lobo (1991) calls the opening of labour inequalities, which for Hirata and Kergoat (2007) makes two principles possible, separation and hierarchy. According to Scott (1995), it is not known exactly the reasons that led to the articulation of this sexual division and the reasons that make the relations between men and women unequal, but it is perpetuated in contemporary times.

Thus, as we seek to identify the organization of working time and rest time of consultants, we unanimously realize that they do not have a definition of hours to be worked per day and established hours. And the women themselves who make their schedules, especially in the case of women who only have resale as an activity, because those who have formal jobs should have a greater organization of their time, and recognize that they use their time of rest to do the work, domestic activities, as well as to resolve resale issues or to serve clients through relationship channels, like face-to-face, and by telephone.

Thus, it can be seen what Dedecca (2004), Ávila and Ferreira (2014), and Santos (2019) points to as unequal working hours between men and women, because these women, besides having their work away from home, either with their formal employment or with resellers, they still have the household chores that are their responsibility, thus reducing and even excluding your rest time, configuring the existence of a double workday, and in some cases, it may be triple hours. It is perceived certain lack of support for this working-class, because it is not supported by the company, either by law, there are no unions to assist the cause and give voice to resellers as a way to claim for rights and fight for the achievement of the same.

According to Interviewee 4 (43 years old, teacher), the remuneration she receives as a consultant is low, since the company does not offer a salary but a profit margin of 30% over the resold value. It is common in the reports of the other interviewees to notice their dissatisfaction with the remuneration they receive.

In the search for better wage conditions, women seek vocational training (Bruschini, 2007). Some of the resellers reported having taken professional courses such as computer science, marketing, sales techniques, because of the contribution that these courses could make to better running their own business and reaching new customers. It is important to note that MNC does not have a career path for its resellers, so they receive no advantage according to their educational and professional qualifications.

This search for professional qualification is the result, according to Bendassolli (2007), of the increased demands and changes of the productive arrangements, which started to demand more qualification of the workers, as well as their adequacy in the flexible working modes.

5.3 Precarious work of cosmetic consultants

In interviews, it is common to find that women resellers make more time for their rest to serve their clients and dedicate themselves to their other activities, such as handicraft, which is also a job. It evidenced what Araújo (2011) pointed out to say that the working hours become ever larger, although the company does not stipulate schedules and journeys, their consultants

feel the need to increase their journeys as a way to also increase their profits, as the following interviewee tells us:

On Sundays when I go to my mother's house for lunch there I take the magazine to show my mother, my brothers, my sisters-in-law and so on ... Extra work, see? Look I take the magazine, then I will receive, I enjoy the weekend for this, on Saturday and Sunday. At night too ... Because when people come to my house, I also sell, sometimes I go to visit, I take the magazine [smile], even in college I take the magazine (Interviewee 4, 43 years old, teacher).

This speech describes what Abílio (2014) noticed in her study with the consultants, about the workdays being "Monday to Monday". They simply do not stop, even when they are not at work, they can receive messages, calls, and visits from customers. These flexible forms of work are pointed by Boltanski and Chiapello (2009) as ways proposed by capitalism to make more and more profits. Thus it is perceived what Abílio (2014) points out as the "work out of work" of these consultants because they are always available to their clients since it is not possible to regulate a dedicated time only for the performance of activities as consultants.

Despite the high workload, the consultants say that they do not have social security forms and regulations that ensure in some way, as can be seen in the following passage:

The remuneration should be higher, we should be entitled, you work 30 years like me, if I were a company, had my rights guaranteed today I was retired, earning without doing anything, right? But today, I have not ... 30 years I spent selling and I have no rights, I have nothing in my favour, neither me nor anyone who sells (Interviewed 4, 43 years, teacher).

If this consultant had sought to contribute on her own, perhaps she would have been retired today, but since the company does not provide this type of insurance for the consultants, if she wishes to end her 30-year resale activity at this time, it will happen to her the same that Abílio (2014) pointed out in her research, it will be just another disabled registration of the company, without offering damages to it, because every day new registrations of consultants are activated.

When we questioned the consultants about their work rights in the consultancy activity, they all said that they never had any rights in this activity. This situation corroborates what Neves (2004) points out how the withdrawal of labour rights during the twentieth century, in response to technological innovations, organizations sought flexible and precarious work

forms. This confirms what Abílio (2014) found, that the regulations are present only within the factory, characterizing the consultants' work as “amateur”.

The “amateur work” defined by Abílio (2014) can also be called, in this context, “self-employment”, as Cacciamali (1982) says exists in the informal sector's forms of work. The consultants do not have the incentive of a fixed salary, but their strength to work and conduct their business.

It is the consultants themselves who set their schedules and set their goals. Because they don't have a salary as compensation for their work, they always look for effective ways to make sales and please their customers. One path used is to maintain stock in their abodes. Interviewee 7, for example, has a store in her house with products bought by her own and displayed right there, at the risk of not having them sold.

Araújo (2011) offers a speech about the intensification of the workforce through flexibility to increase accumulation and profit, says that mainly the informal sector seeks this way of flexible action. This is precisely what the work of consultants constantly demonstrates. Unless they have regulations, their working journeys will increase, because the more they sell, the more they earn. Therefore, they produce a personal salary.

The work of the consultants is performed under its own rules, given that there is the accountability of the same, according to what was reported by Bendassolli (2007). Resellers choose the best way to conduct their activities, however, this accountability reflects not only the sphere of their working methods but also in their relationship with people. Interviewee 4 (43 years old, teacher), for example, says she has often thought about stopping reselling but says she can't because she has also become responsible for her clients, has built bonds and therefore finds it difficult to leave resale, so she keeps maintaining a post she considers “without a future”.

One of the reasons why Interviewee 4 and so many other consultants maintain this idea that resale does not have such a “future” is the payment which is faint and does not meet the basic needs. Women who only have this activity as a mean of income even said that if it were not for the assistance of their husbands, what they earn would not be enough to support the family even if they devoted themselves entirely to such activity, with double and even triple hours. For Vêras de Oliveira (2011) this precariousness of remuneration is common in the activities included in flexible work systems, as well as in temporary work, without labour guarantees.

The cosmetic companies that are inserted in DSS rarely define how consultants work, leaving them free to act. The consultants find that the only charge it requires is to always sell

more and the payment on time, otherwise, the company leaves them lost. This statement can be supported by what says Araújo (2011), about to be common there by any definition in activities of this flexible framework. As one interviewee said: “Because it [MNC] does not even contact us, I think a company is fair, when it keeps in touch with its consultants, comments, asks to know what you need, what is happening to you, it is very difficult” (Interviewee 5, 46 years old, composer).

Sometimes, in this work, it is necessary to establish personal agreements, as Abílio (2014) points out, which can be established between the consultant and the client, as the interviewees mentioned when referring to the numerous agreements they establish for payments, promoting negotiations and even tolerance if the person does not deliver on the promise. It was also possible to understand the agreements of those consultants who have the contribution of the "resellers of resellers", who deal with their business and make a commitment established only in these personal agreements.

6. Final Considerations

Through this research, we realise that some women who work with cosmetics resale in Agreste of Pernambuco do not see such activity as a job, even performing various tasks related to resale, such as choosing products, payments, sales, etc. We learnt that some women work as a cosmetic consultant because they are from a poor background and looking for alternatives to circumvent unemployment.

We also realise that many of these women perform other jobs, usually delegated to women according to the sexual division of work, such as teachers, farmers, and so on.

We concluded that the work performed by cosmetic consultants in the Agreste of Pernambuco, through direct sales, has characteristics such as flexible forms of work, sometimes called “amateur work”, without standards for its execution, without defined hours, without any training requirements, and without social guarantees. It marks this service itself by the pressure for excessive and constant sales, as well as the timely payment of orders, and good quality of service, making women resellers solely responsible for running their business, without any assistance of the company to which they are rendering service, and without the perception of recognition.

As a consequence of these flexible forms of work, made up of high demands, without the proper support of MNC, the work of women consultants of this company in the Agreste of Pernambuco has certainly precarious characteristics. Thus, the observation of the physical tiredness of itinerant dealers, the work of “Monday to Monday”, double working hours, badly

priced, without the resellers being properly paid for their services, informality in informality, in the case of “resellers of resellers”.

We leave as suggestions for the development of future research: investigation regarding the configuration of the work of the leaders that make the “bridge” between MNC and the consultants; research referring to consultants who are in other regions of Brazil, as a way to investigate if there is any difference in the ways of work performed elsewhere; analysis of the working conditions of the “resellers of resellers”.

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