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Emotional Intelligence Assessment, Interpersonal Communication and Integration of People with Disabilities in the Portuguese Labour Market

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ABSTRACT: This research aims to evaluate emotional intelligence, interpersonal communication and the integration of PwD's in the labor market. In this sense, and given the difficulties experienced by these people during the process of labor inclusion, we have tried to: explore and understand the emotions felt by these workers during their working hours and how they manage them; how communication is processed in this context; and also to verify to what extent the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities has improved the process of inclusion. The mixed methodology was used, using qualitative and quantitative research. Fifty workers with disabilities and 314 work colleagues of the Auchan Portugal Group participated in the study. The results showed that the PwD's recognize their emotions when interacting with co-workers, however most disguise them when they feel discomfort, ending up not having a clear communication at the organizational level. Moreover, it was found that, although most PwD's feel integrated, it suggests a greater sensitivity of the employer, adapted work and more accessibility in the workplace**.**

Keywords - communication, disability, emotions, inclusion, work.

I. INTRODUCTION

PwD's often faces many difficulties, both in the workplace and in other areas of life [1]. As far as work is concerned, these difficulties start from the recruitment and selection process, receiving several times different treatment from other candidates [2]. Other difficulties experienced by PwD's in the work context are related to poor communication within the company [3], the few opportunities, being limited to certain areas [4], the lack of adequate physical conditions [5]; and the few incentives to hire [6]. In addition, PwD's are subject to great discrimination by companies, since they consider them as people who do not meet the expected work standards [7]. Many employers still have a negative and pessimistic view on the inclusion of PwD's in companies [8]. However, it has also been shown that these people are regularly seen as productive, capable of many tasks, reliable, motivated, dedicated, sincere and communicative [9]. It has also been demonstrated that the presence of PwD's in companies improves the organizational climate, making it more relaxed and light [10, 11]. PwD's are perfectly capable of performing functions within a company, as long as they meet the appropriate conditions [12]. However, the professional success of this population, as well as of all people in general, is also dependent on the management of their emotions and the organizational communication process [13]. In relation to workers with disabilities, it has been verified that they often do not have the opportunity to express their emotions in a work context, and when they do, they end up being ignored [14]. Many of these emotions are related to negative feelings experienced by PwD during its working day due to negative attitudes from colleagues and managers, generating an increase in levels of stress, anxiety, and difficulties in staying at work [15]. The reasons why the PwD omits what it feels in the workplace are related to prejudice, ignorance about the difference, and lack of compliance with legislation, making it feel uncomfortable [16]. In addition, some studies have shown that one of the PwD's great difficulties in labor integration is related to communication, which is very confusing and not

very flexible [3,17]. Often, these people remain isolated in the workplace, communicating very little with colleagues and employers. This leads to the PwD's feeling more difficult in their integration, to the fact that they are often excluded from various functions and even to their dismissal [18, 19]. In contrast, it was found that companies that provide individual support to their employees with disabilities, clearly and objectively conveying to them the values and vision of the organization and helping them integrate into the work environment, showed a greater permanence of these individuals in employment [20].

Under this assumption, the central objective of this research is to understand how the labour market integrates the PwD's, to understand what emotions they feel and how they generate them throughout the working day, and also to know how communication is processed in the workplace. As such, the following specific objectives have been defined: to know the degree of awareness that workers with disabilities have of their emotions in the daily interactions in their workplace; to evaluate the communication interactions of the PwD's in a work context; and, finally, to verify to what extent the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities has improved the inclusion process.

This work aims to contribute to the unanimous recognition of the right to work, since employment is of central importance in the process of social inclusion and economic emancipation of the PwD's [21]. Moreover, through the analysis of communicational interactions and emotions in the context of work, this work gives us clues for improvements at the organizational level, contributing to a better integration of the PwD's.

II.   METHODOLOGY

The research was carried out at the Auchan Portugal Group, which assumes an example of good practices in the area of PcD's recruitment and integration.

1. Sample

The sample consisted of 50 PwD's, employees of the Auchan Group hypermarkets from North to South of the country, mostly male (60%) and aged between 30 and 49 years. Regarding the type of disability, about half of the participants had Mental or Intellectual Disability (50%); followed by participants with Physical or Motor Disability (32%); with Visual Disability (10%) and Hearing Disabilities (8%). Also participating in this study were 314 co-workers from the PwD's, the majority female (74.4%) and aged between 30 and 49 years.

2. Data Collection

In thepresentstudy, themixedmethodologywaschosen, usingthesemi-structuredinterview, applied to workerswithdisabilities;   and   in   thequantitativemethodology,   thequestionnairewasused,   applied   to colleaguesofworkerswithdisabilities.   Theinterviewguideapplied   to workerswithdisabilitiesconsistedoffiveblocksofquestions, some ofwhichcontainedparagraphs (block 2, 3 and 5). Theinitialpartoftheinterviewcontainedtheinterviewee's socio-demographiccharacterization (name, age, gender, educationalqualifications,   typologyofthedisabilityandnumberofmonths/yearsofworkexperience). Thequestionnaireapplied to colleaguesofworkerswithdisabilities, containedclosedanswersandwasadministered via Google Forms. In theinitialpart, thisquestionnairecontained socio-demographic data, academicqualifications, marital status and socio-professional data - professionalposition, workareaandworkplace. The response possibilitiesvariedon a scaleof 1 to 5 (1=disagreecompletely; 2=disagree; 3=notagreeordisagree; 4=agree; 5=agreecompletely). Thequestionnaireconsistedoffourgroupsofquestions: thefirstgroupcontained 8 questions, thesecond 6 questions, thethird 6 questionsandthelast 7 questions.

3. Data Analysis

The treatment of the collected data included the analysis of content, from pre-defined categories of analysis, resulting from the literature review and the objectives of the investigation. The questionnaires applied were subject to statistical analysis and content analysis. For the qualitative treatment of the data, NVivo 10.1.10. was used, a software used for qualitative and mixed method investigations [22]. The SPSS 24 (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) program was used for the statistical treatment of the data, being considered an extremely powerful tool to manipulate and decipher data collected through questionnaires [23].

III.   RESULTS

1.   Analysis of the semi-structured interview conducted with PwD

Theresultsoftheinterview   to   PwDrevealedthatthe   feeling/motionthatmostcharacterizestheday-to-dayworkofPwDwasPride. Thesituationsthatusuallygeneratedan intense emotion in a workcontextwere "Callingyourattention for yourwork"; "Indifference, discriminationandexclusion", originating a feeling ofsadnessandfrustration; mostofthemdon'ttelltheotherclearlywhatemotiontheyfeltanddisguisethediscomfortoftheemotionstheyfelt;

theytelltheotherwhatbehaviorcausedthediscomfort. As for organizationalcommunication; theyconsideritaccessible; theydidnotconsiderthecommunicationchannelsconfusing. Mostoftheparticipantsconsiderthatthevaluesandvisionoftheorganizationhavebeenclearlytransmitted; thatthereis a constantandcollaborativeinteractionwiththeperson in charge andwithcolleagues. In theircurrentpositionmostoftheparticipantsenteredwiththehelpofentities; theyfeelintegrated; theyhaveattendedprofessional training and no specificadaptationhasbeenmade. In order to provide a greaterprofessionalinsertionofthePwD, theywouldlike to see "More job opportunities", a "Greatersensitivityonthepartofemployers" and "Workadapted to thepersonandhis/herdisability".

2.　Analysisofthequestionnairecarried out to PwD'sco-workers

The results of the questionnaire carried out to PwD's co-workers, namely of the four dimensions under study: General Perception of Hiring; Emotional Intelligence; Interpersonal Communication; and Integration / Workplace Insertion; indicated that the vast majority of PwD's co-workers agreed with the items of the four dimensions, which suggests a positive score with the themes under study. In the General Perception of Hiring dimension, the item "Hiring the PwD contributes to the company's social responsibility" was the one that obtained the highest degree of agreement from almost all participants (92.7%); and in the following two items, although on average they neither agreed nor disagreed, one party agreed with "The PwD has more difficulty in understanding or performing a task" (30%); and "The PwD has lower productivity" (23.6%). In the Emotional Intelligence dimension, the item "I like to share my emotions with the PwD" only slightly more than half agreed with this fact (55.7%). In the Interpersonal Communication dimension the item "The PwD does not adopt inadequate attitudes/behaviors in the organization" about half of the PwD's co-workers disagreed or totally disagreed with this fact (51%) and neither agreed nor disagreed (33.8%); and in the item "Living with the PwD improves the organization's climate" part of the participants neither agreed nor disagreed with this fact (42%).

IV.　　DISCUSSION

Fromtheanalysisofthesemi-structuredinterviewwithPwD, it can beconcludedthatPrideisthe Feeling/Emotionthatmostcharacterizestheday-to-dayworkofPwDwasthefactthattheydrawattention for theirwork, Indifference, DiscriminationandExclusion, giverise to a feeling ofsadnessandfrustration. ThemajorityofthePwDdoesn'ttelltheotherclearlywhattheemotionfeltanddisguisesthediscomfortoftheemotionsfelt; however, ittellstheotherwhatthebehaviorthatcausedthediscomfortwas. Theyconsiderorganizationalcommunicationaccessible; andcommunicationchannels clear. Thevaluesandvisionoftheorganizationweretransmitted in a clear way; thereis a constantandcollaborativeinteractionwiththeperson in charge andwithcolleagues. The entrance to thecurrentpositionwasdonewiththe use ofentities; feeling integrated; attendingprofessional training and no specificadaptationwasdone. In order to provide a greaterprofessionalinsertionofthePwD, theywouldlike to see more job opportunities, more sensitivityonthepartofemployers, andtheworkbeadapted to thepersonandhis/herdisability.

In theanalysisofthequestionnairecarried out to PwD'sco-workers, fourdimensionswereevaluated: General PerceptionofHiring; EmotionalIntelligence; InterpersonalCommunication; andIntegration /Insertionin theWorkplace; in whichthemajorityofPwD'sco-workersobtainedhigh scores in thefourdimensions. In the General PerceptionofHiringdimension, the item "HiringthePwDcontributes to thecompany's social responsibility" wastheonethatobtainedthehighestdegreeofagreementfromalmostallparticipants (92.7%). In theEmotionalIntelligencedimensionthe item "I liketo share myemotionswiththePwD" onlyslightly more thanhalfagreedwiththisfact (55.7%). In theInterpersonalCommunicationdimension, "ThePwD does notadoptinadequateattitudes/behaviors in theorganization", abouthalfoftheco-workersofthePwDdisagreedwiththisfact (51%).

1. General PerceptionofPwDHiring

ThemajorityofPwD'sworkcolleaguesagreed (92.7%) thathiringPwDcontributes to thecompany's social responsibility. Similarly, in thestudy by Estevam et al. [24], halfofthe sample reportedthattheinclusionofPwD's in the labor marketis a matterof social responsibilityandthateveryonehas to take careofthispractice.

2. PwDhas more difficulty in understandingorperforming a task

Only a smallproportionofPwD'sco-workersagreed (30%) thatPwDhas more difficulty in understandingorperforming a task. Ang [25], whenexploringthechallengesandbenefitsofhiringPwD'sfromtheperspectiveofthe managers oftwelveJapanesecompanies, concludedthatofthetwenty managers interviewed, eighteenexpressed negative perceptionsabouthiringPwD's as theyfounditdifficult to performtheirwork.

3. PwDhaslowerproductivity

Only a smallpartofPwD'sco-workersagreed (23.5%) thatPwDhaslowerproductivity. Also for Rojkín [26], peoplewithdisabilitiescontributepositively to thedevelopmentofthecompanybecausethey humanize theirworkwhileproviding a betterworkingenvironment, sincetheytend to focusonthe real problems, leavingasidethe trivial ones, serving as anexample for theircoworkers.

4.PwD stands out for itsdedication to work

RegardingthefactthatPwD stands out for itsdedication to work, mostofitsco-workers (59.9%) agreedwiththisfact. A systematicreviewoftheliteraturebetween 2015 and 2020 of Vasconcelos and Maranhão [27], whenPwDfeelshappyaboutfactorsassociatedwithqualityoflifeatwork, ittends to havehigherlevelsoforganizationalcommitment.

5. I can seethe positive sideofhaving a PwD in theworkplace

ThemajorityofPwD'sco-workersagreed (79.3%) thatthey can seethe positive sideofhaving a PwD in theworkplace. Also Lorenzo e Silva [28], in a studyofprofessionalsresponsible for therecruitmentandselectionof candidates in theircompanies, abouthalfoftheparticipantspointed out positive factors for thecompanywiththehiringofdisabledworkers, whiletheother 50% indicatedthatthere are advantages for theperson. However, themajority (92%) signaledtheappearanceofdiligences for thecompany, such as therequest for differentiatedactions to adapttheenvironment, as anunfavorablefactor to thehiringofPwD's.

6.Hiring a PwD improves theimageoftheorganizationwithclients

ThemajorityofPwD'sco-workersagreed (70.1%) thathiring a PwD improves theorganization'simagewithclients. Also Miranda and Souza [29], concludedthattheinclusionofPwD in companiesiscapableofattractingnewtypesofconsumers, besidespromoting social andpsychologicalrehabilitation, sincethe feeling ofproductivitycontributes to improve thequalityofprofessionallife.

7.Hiring a PwD improves theimageoftheorganizationwiththeworkers

ThemajorityofPwD'sco-workersagreed (72.3%) thathiring a PwD improves theorganization'simagewiththeworkers. Also for Scott et al. [17], hiringpeoplewithautismorotherdisabilities improves theimageofthecompanyamongemployees, having a very positive impactandpromoting a cultureofinclusion.

8. ThePwD can properlyperformthefunctionsprovidedithastheappropriateworkingconditions
Inteligência Emocional

ThemajorityofPwD'sco-workersagreed (83.4%) thatPwD can adequatelyperformthefunctions as long as ithastheappropriateworkingconditions. Theseresults are in linewiththoseoftheSartikaandDevitastudy [12], whichshowedthatPwD'sworkingskills, namelyintellectual, emotionaland social skills, weregood, suggestingthatthesepeople can perfectlyperformthefunctions as long as theyhavetheappropriateconditions.

EmotionalIntelligence

9. I easilyrecognizePwD'semotionsthroughitsbehaviorand facial expressions

MostPwDco-workersagreed (66.5%) thattheyeasilyrecognizePwD'semotionsthroughtheirbehaviorand facial expressions**.**

10. I amawareofthe non-verbal messages (gestures, facial expressions, tone ofvoice, etc.) that I transmit to thePwD

ThemajorityofPwD'sco-workersagreed (71.3%) thatthey are awareofthe non-verbal messagestheytransmit to thePwD. Theseresults coincide withthoseof Espinoza [30], whoconcludedthat for some bosses PwD's are treated as veryfragileandsensitivepeople, sothey are careful in thewaytheyexpressthemselves (verballyornot) beforethem.

11. I helpPwDfeelbetterwhenitisunmotivated (sad)

MostofPwD'sco-workersagreed (85.4%) thattheyhelpPwDfeelbetterwhenitisunmotivated (sad). Espinoza [30], foundthatthediscourseonPwD's labor inclusionismostly positive; in whichPwD's are seen as equals; thereis a companionshiprelationship.

12. **WhenPwDtalksaboutanimportantevent in yourlife, I amsensitive to your feelings andemotions**

MostofthePwD'sco-workersagreed (89.2%) thatwhenthePwDtalksaboutanimportantevent in yourlife, you are sensitive to your feelings andemotions. Mik-Meyer [31], foundthatoneofthemainbehaviorsofhiscolleagueswiththePwD'swasthatofoverprotectionandhelp, sincetheywereallverycarefulanddelicate to dealwiththesepeopleon a dailybasis, alwaysbeingattentive to their feelings andemotions.

13. I recognizeandunderstandthelimitationsofthePwD

ThemajorityofPwD'sco-workersagreed (87.6%) to recognizeandunderstandthelimitationsofthePwD. Espinoza [30] foundthathiscolleagueswereawareoftheirlimitationsandhelpedthemwhenevertheycouldbecausetheyneededconstantsupport. According to theauthor, thiscorresponds to a hierarchicalvisionwheretheemployeeshavetheperceptionthatthePwD's are dependent, lesscompetentandslower.

InterpersonalCommunication

14. In general thereis a goodcommunicationwithPwD

ThemajorityofPwD'sco-workersagreed (83.4%) thatoverallthereisgoodcommunicationwiththePwD. Theseresultsgoagainstthoseof Kitis et al. [9] whoconcludedthattheemployeewithintellectualdisabilityisseen as communicative, sociable, honest, sincereandpunctualatwork.

15. PwDusuallyhasproblems in therelationshipwithcolleagues

Theco-workersofPwD, disagreedthatthePwDusuallyhasproblems in therelationshipwithcolleagues. Heeraand Devi [32], in turn, concludedthatemployersusuallyworryabouttheimpactthatPwD'spoor performance mayhaveonotheremployeesandontheirability to complywith rules withintheorganization, whichmaygenerateproblems in therelationshipbetween team members.

16.PwDmayadoptinappropriateattitudes/behaviors in theorganization

AbouthalfofPwD'sco-workersdisagreed (51%) thatPwDmayadoptinappropriateattitudes/behaviors in theorganization, however, onepart (33.8%) neitheragreenordisagreewiththisfact.

17. PwDhascontact/interactionwiththedifferentworkers/ departments

ThemajorityofPwD'sco-workersagreed (76.1%) thatPwDhascontact/interactionwiththedifferentworkers/departments. Theseresults are differentfromthosefound in thestudy by Nota et al. [19], whereitwasfoundthatemployersinteractedverylittlewithdisabledemployees, andwhentheydiditwasnotdirectly, butthroughintermediaries.

18. LivingwithPwD improves theorganization'sclimate

A little more thanhalfofPcD'sco-workersagreedthatlivingwithPwD improves theorganization'sclimate (54.1%). Lanzo [11] alsofoundthatthecompaniesconsideredthePwD's, as valuableelements in theorganization, becausetheycreate a betterworkingenvironmentandtheirintegrationmakesthepeoplearoundthem realize whatthey are capableofdoing, eliminatingunnecessarystigma.

Integration / WorkplaceInsertion

19. Thecompanyaims to promotethe social inclusionofPwD

ThemajorityofPwD'sworkcolleaguesagreed (82.8%) thatthecompanyaims to promotePwD's social inclusion. Similarly, in thestudy by de Silva et al. [33] itwasfoundthatabout 50% oftheinterviewesstatedthatthecompanyisalwayslooking for qualifiedpeopleregardlessoftheirlimitations, aiming to promotePwD'sinclusion.

20. Thecompanyisstructurallyprepared to receive a PwD

ThemajorityofPwDworkcolleaguesagreed (60.8%) thatthecompanyisstructurallyprepared to receive a PwD. TheMilanovic-Dobrotastudy [34] concludesthatthemainbarriers in hiringpeoplewithintellectualdisabilities are thelackofprofessionalexperienceofthisgroup, thelackof incentives to hirethemandtheneed for physicaladaptationoftheworkenvironment.

21.Madethenecessaryadaptations to receivethePwD (buildramps, changerooms)

Less thanhalfofthePwD'sco-workers (47.5%) agreedthat "theymadethenecessaryadaptations to receivethePwD". In thestudy by de Silva et al. [33] itwasalsoverifiedthatmostoftheemployeesstatedthatthecompanieshave a gooddegreeofqualification to meettheneedsofemployeeswithdisabilities.

22. Received training/informationthatwould prepare him to workwith a PwD

AbouthalfofPwD'sco-workers (55.4%) disagreedwiththisfact. According to Rosa et al. [35] thispracticeonthepartoftheorganization can be a greatobstacle to theinclusionofPwD in theworkenvironment, as colleaguesmaynotbeprepared to trainthemadequatelyorevennotbewilling to do so.

23. Allco-workersacceptedPwDwell

ThemajorityofPwD'sco-workersagreed (71.7%)thatallco-workersacceptedPwDwell. Theseresults are coincidentwiththoseof de Silva et al. [33] in whichmostoftheinterviewed managers reportedthattherewas no difficulty in adaptationonthepartoftheotheremployees, andallacceptedthePwDwell.

24. PwDiswellintegrated in theorganizationalenvironment

ThemajorityofPwD'sco-workersagreed (77.1%) thatPwDiswellintegrated in theorganizationalenvironment. According to Silva et al. [33] thisperspective varies according to theexpectationsofeachemployee.

V. CONCLUSIONS

This research hascontributed to thedeepeningoftheknowledgethatPWD'shaveabouttheiremotions in theworkplaceandthewaytheycommunicatethoseemotions to theircolleagues. Thisstudyalsoallowedus to knowandanalysethePwD'scommunicativeinteractions in a workingcontext, as well as to verifyiftheyfeltintegrated in thecompany. Theresultsallowed to verifythatthePwD'srecognizetheiremotionswhentheyinteractwiththeirco-workers. However, despiteknowingwhatgeneratesan intense emotion, mostoftheinterviewesdisguisethediscomfortfeltand do notcommunicateclearly to theotherthatemotionfelt. Mostparticipants do

notconsiderthechannelsofcommunicationconfusing.   Furthermore,   theyreportedthattherewas   clear anddirectcommunicationwhenthecompanytransmitteditsvaluesandvision. Itisalsoconcludedthattheemployeraims to   promotethe   social   inclusionofthePwDandisstructurallyprepared   to   receivethesepeople, beingawareofthelegislation in force. Moreover, itwasfoundthat, althoughmostPwD'sfeelintegrated, suggests a greatersensitivityoftheemployer, adaptedworkand more accessibility in theworkplace.

As   far   as   PwD'sco-workers   are   concerned, thisstudyrevealedthatthevastmajorityofparticipantsagreedthathiringPwDcontributes   to   social   responsibility. Furthermore,   theresultsindicatethatmostofthecolleaguesbelievethatthecompanyhastheobjectiveofpromotingthe social inclusionofthePwD.

Thisstudyalsoshowedthatcolleagueshave a positive perceptionabouttheprofessional performance ofPwD's, sincetheystatethatthey stand out for theirdedication to work. Theinterviewedcolleaguesseethe positive sideofhaving a PwD in theworkplace, whichmeansthatthesecolleaguesconsiderthehiringofPwD's by theemployer to beanadvantage. Theyalsoagreethathiring a PwD improves theimageoftheorganizationwiththeclients as well as withtheworkers.

The main limitation of this study refers to the time factor, as a time limit was imposed for the elaboration of the study. The second limitation is related to the reduced sample size of the interviews conducted with the PwD as a worker. In the future, it would be interesting to conduct a study with a larger sample and extend it to other work contexts, as well as to other types of deficiencies. Another limitation of the study refers to the possible high facial validity of the instruments, i.e., interviewees may present a more positive scenario of the employer for fear of possible consequences.

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