

Original article



Challenges faced by psychologists in public policies: analysis of Regional Council's research reports

Desafios enfrentados por psicólogos em políticas públicas: análise dos relatórios de pesquisa de um Conselho Regional

Desafíos enfrentados por psicólogos en la política pública: Análisis de los informes de investigación de un Consejo Regional

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ABSTRACT | INTRODUCTION: Brazilian psychology has a historical background characterized by the integration of self-employment and private practice. However, the Brazilian Federal Constitution of 1988 introduced public policies that significantly changed the professional scenario. In 2006, the Brazilian Conselho Federal de Psicologia – CFP (Federal Council of Psychology) established the Centro de Referência Técnica em Psicologia e Políticas Públicas – CREPOP (Center for Technical Reference in Psychology and Public Policies) with the purpose of investigating and enhancing work in this domain. **OBJECTIVE:** The objective of this article is to analyze the challenges faced by psychologists involved in public policy initiatives in the state of Bahia, Brazil. **METHOD:** The study commenced with a documentary research approach, examining 14 research reports that synthesized the outcomes of investigations conducted by CREPOP in the aforementioned state. The analysis was facilitated through the utilization of the MAXQDA® software. **RESULTS:** The results revealed several issues about: 1) the complexities of multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary collaboration; 2) techniques and training; 3) management practices; 4) infrastructure and human resources; and 5) ethical considerations. **CONCLUSION:** It is evident that the organization, allocation of resources, and overall precariousness of public policies significantly influence professional practices within the field of psychology.

KEYWORDS: Psychology. Public Policy. Professional Practice.

RESUMO | INTRODUÇÃO: A psicologia brasileira tem em seu histórico a característica de uma atuação privada como profissão autônoma. Contudo, a Constituição Federal de 1988 fundamentou campos de atuação em políticas públicas que alteraram o cenário profissional. Em 2006, o Conselho Federal de Psicologia funda o Centro de Referência Técnica em Psicologia e Políticas Públicas (CREPOP), voltado a investigar e qualificar a atuação nesse setor. **OBJETIVO:** Este artigo busca analisar os desafios apontados por psicólogas(os) inseridas(os) nas políticas públicas da Bahia, Brasil. **MÉTODO:** Partiu-se de uma pesquisa documental com 14 minutas que sintetizam resultados de pesquisas sobre atuação profissional realizadas pelo CREPOP do referido estado. A análise foi apoiada pelo software MAXQDA®. **RESULTADOS:** Identificou-se como dificuldades aspectos relacionados a: 1) atuação multiprofissional e interdisciplinar; 2) técnicas e formação; 3) gestão; 4) infraestrutura e recursos humanos; e 5) questões éticas. **CONCLUSÃO:** A forma como as políticas públicas se organizam, seus investimentos e precarizações, contribuem para moldar as práticas profissionais em Psicologia.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Psicologia. Políticas Públicas. Práticas Profissionais.

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RESUMEN | INTRODUCCIÓN: La psicología brasileña tiene antecedentes históricos caracterizados por la integración del trabajo por cuenta propia y la práctica privada. Sin embargo, la Constitución Federal brasileña de 1988 introdujo políticas públicas que trajeron cambios significativos en el escenario profesional. En 2006, el Conselho Federal de Psicologia – CFP (Consejo Federal de Psicología) de Brasil estableció el Centro de Referência Técnica em Psicologia e Políticas Públicas – CREPOP (Centro de Referência Técnica em Psicologia y Políticas Públicas) con el objetivo de investigar y mejorar el trabajo en este dominio. **OBJETIVO:** Analizar los desafíos que enfrentan los psicólogos involucrados en iniciativas de políticas públicas en el estado de Bahia, Brasil. **MÉTODO:** El estudio se inició con un enfoque de investigación documental, examinando 14 registros de investigación que sintetizaron los resultados de las investigaciones realizadas por el CREPOP en el mencionado estado. El análisis se facilitó mediante la utilización del software MAXQDA®. **RESULTADOS:** Los resultados revelaron varios problemas relacionados con: 1) las complejidades de la colaboración multidisciplinaria e interdisciplinaria; 2) técnicas y entrenamiento; 3) prácticas de gestión; 4) infraestructura y recursos humanos; y 5) consideraciones éticas. **CONCLUSIÓN:** se evidencia que la organización, asignación de recursos y, en general, la precariedad de las políticas públicas influyen significativamente en las prácticas profesionales en el campo de la psicología.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Psicología. Políticas Públicas. Práctica Profesional.

Introduction

The enactment of the 1988 Federal Constitution marked a significant turning point in the formulation and systematization of Brazilian public policies. Following a period of repression and limited popular participation in institutional politics, this document emerged as a promise of civil society's active involvement in shaping the Brazilian State.

Within the constitutional framework, "Chapter II" stands out for its provisions that address the social rights that must be guaranteed by the State. Of particular importance is "Article 6", which highlights the following guidelines advocated by organized civil society:

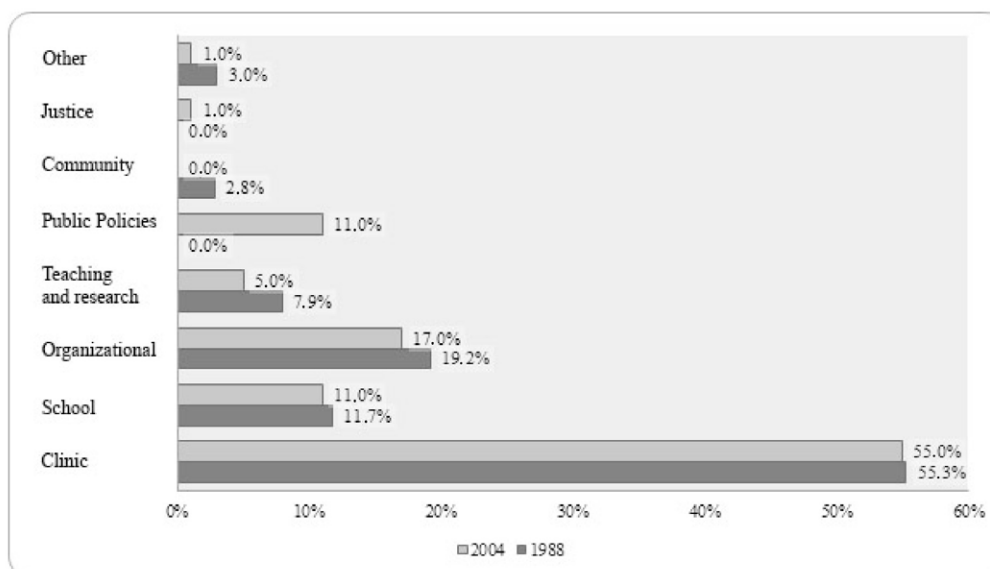
Art. 6 – Education, health, food, work, housing, transportation, leisure, security, social security, protection of motherhood and childhood, and assistance to the destitute, are social rights, as set forth by this Constitution (Constituição da República Federativa do Brasil, 1988).

In this article, the State acknowledges its responsibility towards its citizens in various areas considered fundamental to human well-being. This text, in conjunction with other pertinent provisions outlined in the Federal Constitution, serves as the foundation for the creation and structuring of public policies aimed at effectively realizing the mentioned social rights. For instance, Federal Law No. [8.080](#), enacted on September 19, 1990 (1990), and Federal Law No. [8.742](#), enacted on December 7, 1993 (1993), provide the framework for the development of public health and social assistance policies, respectively. These laws are legally guided by the principles outlined in the Brazilian Federal Constitution ([Constituição da República Federativa do Brasil](#), 1988). Additionally, civil participation in governance through social control mechanisms is another crucial element present in public policies, further reinforced by the constitutional provisions.

Moreover, the implementation of the Constitution of 1988 and the subsequent expansion of public policies in domains such as health, education, and justice have had a notable impact on the field of Psychology as a profession. In a publication by the Federal Council of Psychology (CFP) titled "Who is the Brazilian Psychologist?", which dates back to 1988, a nationwide survey was conducted to provide insights into the professional and academic profile of psychologists (CFP, 1988). The findings revealed little diversity in professional practice, with 55.3% of psychologists primarily engaged in clinical work, often as self-employed. Additionally, 11.7% of psychologists were employed in the educational sector, while 19.2% were involved in organizational settings. The remaining professionals were distributed among various areas such as teaching, research, and community psychology. Notably, the publication did not highlight any significant numerical representation of psychologists in the realm of public policies.

In 2004, the CFP collaborated with the Brazilian Institute of Public Opinion and Statistics (IBOPE) to conduct an additional survey, aiming to gather updated data on the professional profile of psychologists. This survey, which involved the participation of 2,000 psychologists, constituted the most recent documented research conducted by the CFP for this specific purpose at the time the analyzed documents in this article were published¹. Figure 1 illustrates the comparison of data from the two aforementioned surveys, highlighting the variations that occurred during this time period:

Figure 1. Percentage of psychologists by professional field in Brazil (1998-2004)



Source: the authors, based on the Federal Council of Psychology (1988; 2004²).

During the period between the two surveys, there was a noticeable expansion of public services and an increase in competitive examinations and selections offering positions for psychologists. This resulted in the gradual integration of Psychology into previously unexplored areas, such as public management, socio-educational measures, environmental preservation, civil defense, public security, and various legal institutions. Additionally, it is worth highlighting the significant growth of Psychology's involvement with economically vulnerable populations, particularly through social assistance policies.

The analysis of psychology events also highlights the increasing breadth of activities and their integration into public policies. In 2000, the CFP organized the 1st National Exhibition of Practices in Psychology, which showcased approximately 1,500 works encompassing diverse areas and themes, including mental health, violence, aging, disability, substance abuse, prostitution, labor, citizenship, and institutionalization, among others. This event demonstrated a more interdisciplinary, widespread, and innovative approach to psychology (Ferreira Neto, 2010). The National Exhibition of Practices in Psychology was subsequently reintroduced in 2012, attracting over 4,000 submissions and drawing the participation of 12,500 psychologists and students. This further underscored the expanding scope of psychological action and engagement.

¹ During the writing of this article in 2021, the CFP conducted the Census of Brazilian Psychology, a comprehensive study published in two volumes (CFP, 2022a; 2022b). However, the decision was made not to include the data from these volumes in this article in order to focus on the scenario outlined during the period covered by the analyzed documents.

² In the research published in 1988, there is no specific data available regarding the involvement of psychologists in the justice field. Similarly, the research published in 2004 does not provide specific data regarding the participation of psychologists in the community sector.

In response to this evolving landscape and with a commitment to incorporate the specificities of working in public policies, the CFP introduced the Social Bank of Services in Psychology (Banco Social de Serviços em Psicologia) in 2003. This initiative encompassed a range of activities that united psychologists in social-oriented work, including initiatives focused on employment and income generation, socio-educational projects, mental health support, care for children and adolescents facing social risks, engagement with the prison system and public security, educational processes, social communication, and more. The Social Bank of Services in Psychology aimed to provide a platform for psychologists to contribute to various areas of social concern.

The program was designed to implement social intervention projects through partnerships with public entities, harnessing the volunteer work hours of Brazilian psychologists. The program aimed to utilize psychological resources, practices, and innovative intervention strategies to promote health, advocate for human rights, and foster the overall development of citizenship. Implemented until 2005, the program achieved several significant outcomes, including: showcasing psychological practices that had historically received little visibility; fostering closer collaboration between psychologists and the government, thereby highlighting the potential of psychologists in public policy implementation; strengthening the role of psychologists in shaping public policies; and contributing to the exploration of psychology-based alternatives for addressing social issues in Brazil (CFP, 2005a).

Building upon this experience, the CFP replaced the Social Bank of Services in Psychology with the establishment of the Technical Reference Center in Psychology and Public Policies (Centro de Referência Técnica em Psicologia e Políticas Públicas) (CREPOP) in 2006. CREPOP's primary objective is to identify significant practices within the field of psychology, systematize and document them, and subsequently disseminate this knowledge to society. By producing and sharing comprehensive and reliable information, CREPOP enhances the guidance provided by the Psychology Councils System (including Federal and Regional Councils) and promotes the development of psychologists' theoretical and technical

understanding of the processes involved in the formulation, planning, and implementation of public policies (CREPOP, 2012).

During its establishment, CREPOP was designed based on three overarching guidelines that were conceived at a national level but also took into account regional specificities. Firstly, it catalyzes political actions within the Psychology Councils System, functioning as a "Management Resource" that facilitates the coordination and collaboration between Regional and Federal Councils of Psychology and public services. Secondly, it focuses on "Permanent Research in Public Policies" to continuously update the knowledge of the Psychology Councils System regarding psychology and Brazilian public policies. Lastly, it aims to investigate the professional practice of psychologists in public policies, seeking to comprehend the core aspects and theoretical-practical dimensions of their involvement (CREPOP, 2012).

Nevertheless, it is acknowledged that despite the progress made, the practice of psychology in public policies still falls short of meeting the needs of the population, compounded by the dismantling observed in administrations that aim to undermine state interventions. Consequently, this study aims to provide a comprehensive account of the role of psychology in public policies, with a particular emphasis on the analysis of the challenges narrated by professionals working across various domains. Drawing upon the research drafts developed by CREPOP of the Regional Council of Psychology of Bahia (CREPOP/CRP-03), the study seeks to discuss the hurdles encountered by psychology in this field of practice and to validate the contributions made by professionals in public management, while valuing their unique perspectives and experiences within their respective service contexts.

Materials and methods

This article presents a qualitative documental descriptive research methodology. The analysis focuses on the records of researches conducted by the Center for Technical Reference in Psychology and Public Policy (CREPOP) of the Regional Council of Psychology of the 3rd Region in Bahia (CRP-03).

These research reports serve as concise documents that provide localized data derived from national research on psychologists working in the field of public policy.

CREPOP, as previously mentioned, is an operational sector of the Psychology Councils System established in 2006 with the purpose of conducting research and providing support to the Professional Psychology Councils in guiding Psychology and public policies. As part of its efforts, nationwide researches are conducted with various stages that involve mapping the field of work of psychologists throughout the country. These researches employ tools such as interviews, conversation circles, questionnaires, and other methods to gather data on the daily work of professionals engaged in public policies (CFP, 2012). At the conclusion of each research process, a reference document is released, targeting professionals and students involved in the specific field of activity under investigation. In the data production stage, professionals actively involved in the implementation of public policies are consulted. This approach is based on the understanding that these professionals represent the most valuable source of information regarding professional practice.

During the CREPOP research process, regional reports are compiled and submitted to the CFP, providing local data on professional practice. In line with this, CRP-03 has adopted a practice of producing condensed documents that present the research findings specifically related to its state. These documents, referred to as "research reports", serve to anticipate and systematize the knowledge generated at the regional level. The research reports provide a concise overview of the specific public policy under investigation, the challenges faced by psychologists in the field, key tools utilized, ethical dilemmas encountered, theoretical frameworks employed, and other relevant information pertaining to the daily practice of Psychology. They include topics such as the number of psychology professionals involved in that public policy, their roles and work processes, the theories they adopt, and ethical aspects of their practice.

We collected all the research reports available on the CRP-03 website up to 2022, the time at which this study took place. Table 1 provides an overview of the available research reports published by CRP-03.

Table 1. List of research reports accessed and indication of number of professionals heard for its elaboration

Year	Research record theme	Number of interviewed psychologists ⁴
2007	Prison System	29
2008	Primary Health Care	14
2008	Inclusive education	24
2008	Socio-educational Measures in an Open context	18
2008	Services to Combat Violence against Women	27
2009	Special Reference Centers of Social Assistance (CREAS)	39
2009	Basic education	13
2009	Urban Mobility, Transport and Traffic	10
2010	Social Assistance Reference Center (CRAS)	70
2010	LGBTT Citizenship Promotion Policies	05
2010	Sports Public Policy	12
2010	Medium and High Complexity Hospital Services of the Brazilian National Public Health System (SUS)	12
2018	Sexual Rights and Reproductive Rights	09
2019	Psychosocial Care Network (RAPS)	18

Source: the authors (2024).

³ The research reports discussed in this article are publicly available documents and can be accessed on the website of CRP-03 (Regional Council of Psychology of Bahia) at the following URL: <https://crp03.org.br/crepop/producoes-regionais/minutas-de-pesquisa/>.

⁴ It is possible that the actual figures may be lower than reported due to the inclusion of duplicate responses from professionals who participated in both individual and group interviews during the research process. However, it is important to note that this does not diminish the significance of the findings generated by these research studies.

To facilitate the reading and analysis of the research reports, the MAXQDA® software was employed. This software provided various features and tools such as coding resources, the ability to read coded segments, and visual aids like word clouds, document portraits, and MAXMaps. By utilizing MAXQDA®, the analysis process was enhanced, ensuring greater effectiveness and objectivity. Moreover, the software facilitated the organization and interpretation of the extensive amount of data involved in the research, enabling a comprehensive and thorough examination.

The analysis process involved the following steps: 1) Thorough reading of the research reports; 2) Establishment of main categories to guide the coding process; coding involved marking segments with labels as subcategories; the main categories included difficulties related to multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary work, technical and training difficulties, management difficulties, infrastructural difficulties, and ethical issues; 3) Re-reading of the research reports, marking segments with the identified subcategories; 4) Reviewing and refining the collection of codes to eliminate repetitions and ensure precision; 5) Exclusion of subcategories present in only one document; 6) Utilizing MAXQDA® software's analysis tools and visual features to examine the relationship between categories, their distribution, and revisiting relevant passages. These steps led to the research findings, which will be presented subsequently.

Results and discussion

The analysis process involved several main categories that guided the coding of the research reports. Category 01 focused on difficulties associated with multiprofessional and interdisciplinary practice,

while Category 02 addressed technical and training challenges. Category 03 encompassed difficulties related to public management, Category 04 explored infrastructure and human resources issues, and Category 05 delved into ethical concerns. These categories provided a framework for analyzing the data and gaining insights into the challenges faced in the field of Psychology and public policies.

Category 01: challenges in multiprofessional and interdisciplinary practice

This category focuses on the concept of multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary action, which is a fundamental aspect in major public policies like the Brazilian National Healthcare System (SUS) and the Brazilian Social Assistance System (SUAS) (Salgado, 2017). It encompasses the difficulties that arise when professionals from different disciplines collaborate and work together in the context of public policies. The category highlights the need to navigate through various professional perspectives, coordinate efforts, and integrate knowledge and practices from different fields to effectively address complex social issues.

The term "multidisciplinary" refers to the collaboration among work teams consisting of professionals from diverse fields. On the other hand, "interdisciplinary" implies the exchange of knowledge between professionals with different backgrounds, resulting in the creation of integrated and comprehensive knowledge. The interdisciplinary approach aims to address tasks that are not adequately covered by highly specialized activities. Our examination of the documents focused on identifying challenges related to this aspect, with a particular emphasis on the involvement of psychologists in collaborative work settings. Table 2 presents the subcategories that were formulated based on our analysis, along with the frequency of their occurrence.

Table 2. Challenges in Multiprofessional and Interdisciplinary Practice

Subcategory	Documents with occurrence	
	N	%
Multiprofessional work	10	71.4
Validation of psychology	7	50
Participation in collective settings	5	35.7
Total documents with category occurrence⁵	13	92.8

Source: the authors (2024).

The analysis revealed that Psychology professionals face challenges in establishing effective collaboration with professionals from other fields, particularly those in the fields of Law and biomedicine. In this context, the dominance of the medical discourse is evident, as it often constricts complex phenomena to solely biological aspects, leading to conflicts between Psychology and other disciplines. Communication issues were also highlighted, especially in relation to contentious topics such as violence, sexuality, and justice, which can hinder interdisciplinary collaboration. These difficulties impact the collaborative nature of the work, which is often intended to be conducted in a collective format.

Psychology professionals also express a sense of isolation in certain work environments, as essential psychological themes are often delegated exclusively to the psychologists, resulting in limited integration with other team members. Professionals working in the prison system and in policies related to sexual and reproductive rights highlighted that this process has led to the isolation of the psychology sector from other disciplines. Additionally, there is a lack of recognition for the role of Psychology in public policies, particularly in fields outside of healthcare, where its incorporation is relatively recent and/or not well-established, such as education, sports, justice, and social assistance. Even within the healthcare sector, there is a lack of understanding among managers and colleagues regarding the scope of Psychology, leading to the underutilization of its potential capabilities.

The research findings indicate a low level of participation among psychologists in collective spaces such as forums, unions, associations, and social control councils. The importance of active participation in these spaces is emphasized in the reports as it contributes to the organization of the profession and the reaffirmation of its significance in public policies. [Hur \(2007\)](#) argued that political engagement in professional organizations is crucial for the development of Brazilian Psychology, advocating for social commitment and the protection of social rights. However, the analyzed reports reveal a current trend of these spaces being marginalized and discouraged, leading to a weakening of professional articulation. This decline is perceived by the professionals and has an impact on their work practices.

This category of difficulties highlights a contrast with the expected standard of Psychology's performance in public policies, which emphasizes a team approach. In the field of public health, the adoption of multidisciplinary practice has been recognized as a training strategy, fostering partnerships between educational institutions and the SUS, as seen in the implementation of multidisciplinary health residencies ([Bezerra & Cury, 2020](#)). Similarly, in the area of social assistance, Psychology is considered an integral part of the minimum teams, alongside social workers, at all levels of protection. Consequently, the encouragement of interdisciplinarity is a characteristic of the identified public policies ([Thiesen, 2008](#)).

⁵ In the total count presented in this and subsequent tables, duplicated documents that contain multiple subcategories within the same main category of difficulties have been excluded. This ensures that each document is only counted once, regardless of the number of subcategories mentioned within that specific category.

Interdisciplinarity refers to a paradigm that aims to transcend disciplinary boundaries by fostering the integration of diverse knowledge domains (Thiesen, 2008). This approach challenges the compartmentalization of knowledge and promotes exchanges between different actors. In the realm of the human sciences, where absolute truths are not sought, an interdisciplinary perspective assumes great importance. According to Goldman (1979), breaking away from the disciplinary model allows for multiple interpretations of the same phenomenon, enabling a deeper understanding of its various dimensions. This dialectical process involves comprehending the relationship between individual components and the larger whole, resulting in the generation of new knowledge that integrates and articulates existing perspectives (Carneiro et al., 1994). Given the complex needs of users in public services, comprehensive care that encompasses a wide range of aspects cannot be effectively provided by a single professional category alone.

Challenges arise when attempting to apply this knowledge to the professional practice of Psychology. While there is a growing demand for multidisciplinary teams, true interdisciplinarity occurs when collective knowledge is actively constructed and shared among team members. However, in the context of Brazilian Psychology, engagement with other professions is a relatively recent development, especially when considering the historical dominance of individual clinical practice. Additionally, the recent integration of Psychology into public policies is accompanied by a limited understanding among professionals from other fields regarding the role of psychologists in service delivery, particularly when it deviates from the traditional individual clinical model. This limited understanding further complicates the effective implementation of interdisciplinarity in practice.

Consequently, the convergence of these factors contributes to the difficulties mentioned, including the limited history of Psychology in multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary work, the lack of awareness among other team members about the contributions of Psychology, and the existing gaps in the training of psychologists to effectively engage in teamwork within public policies. As previously noted by Oliveira, Garrido, and Jacinto (2020), the current training in Psychology often falls short in preparing professionals for collaborative work within the context of public policies.

Category 02: technical and training obstacles

In this category, the difficulties are related to the procedural, attitudinal, and conceptual aspects required for the practice of psychology in public policies. The National Curriculum Guidelines (NCGs) for Psychology undergraduate programs outline a set of skills and competencies that psychologists should possess, including the ability to develop healthcare interventions, make informed decisions, communicate effectively with other professionals and the public, and demonstrate leadership in multidisciplinary teams (Resolução CNE/CES nº 5, 2011)⁶.

However, as highlighted by Oliveira, Garrido, and Jacinto (2020), working in public policies extends beyond the curriculum's predefined scope, requiring an ethical stance aligned with human rights and the principles outlined in the legal norms that govern each specific policy. The findings in this category are presented in Table 3.

⁶ During the evaluation period of this article, new National Curriculum Guidelines for the psychology course were published (Resolução CNE/CES nº 1, 2023). However, it was decided to retain the mention of the 2011 guidelines to maintain fidelity to the period during which this text was written..

Table 3. Technical and Training Obstacles

Subcategory	Documents with occurrence	
	N	%
Continuing education and supervision	8	57.1
Knowledge of public policy	5	35.7
Qualifications	5	35.7
Professional identity	5	35.7
Specificities of Practice in Public Policies	3	24.4
Specific Theoretical Framework for Psychology	2	14.3
Total documents with category occurrence	11	78.5

Source: the authors (2024).

The primary challenge reported is the insufficient availability of continuing education and supervision, despite the existence of strategies for continuing education in SUS and SUAS ([Ministério do Desenvolvimento Social e Combate à Fome](#), 2004). The findings indicate that these strategies have not been effectively implemented, leading to a perceived deficiency among professionals that directly affects the quality of service delivery. The lack of adequate qualifications among professionals was identified as a consequence of this issue. Respondents further noted that the lack of qualifications is not specific to Psychology but extends to the entire team, impeding the successful implementation of policies as intended.

Another reported difficulty is the lack of knowledge about the public policy in which professionals operate, particularly within the social assistance policy. This issue extends to the field of health as well, despite Psychology's historical involvement in this area. Consequently, professionals emphasized the need for a better understanding of the specific role and practice of Psychology within public policies. This problem can be attributed to deficiencies in undergraduate education, as well as the lack of effective continuing education strategies following graduation.

The complexity of the demands encountered in public policies necessitates continuous professional development. [Miccas](#) and [Batista](#) (2014) highlight the significance of ongoing education in health and social assistance policies. Both fields allocate resources for training; however, the adopted model is deemed insufficient by the authors. At times, the topics addressed in training programs are disconnected from real-world practice or are inadequately implemented, failing to encompass the entire scope of work. Additionally, [Oliveira](#), [Garrido](#), and [Jacinto](#) (2020) found that some professionals engage in "self-directed continuing education" rather than following institutional schedules. These findings underscore the importance of integrating training activities into the routine and planning of public policy implementation.

In conjunction with these challenges, there is a limited availability of specific references for Psychology, reflecting the relatively recent development of this field with limited academic production and guiding materials. These factors have an impact on the formation of professional identity for psychologists working in the realm of public policies. As a result, some professionals may not fully recognize or embrace the unique aspects of their work within this context, leading to a tendency to replicate more traditional activities, such as individual clinical practice, which is a more established area within the profession.

[Brigagão](#), [Nascimento](#), and [Spink](#) (2011) delve into this matter, emphasizing that the interface between Psychology and public policy extends beyond technical expertise. The diverse array of demands within public policies necessitates professionals to redefine their practice, which entails a thorough theoretical understanding of psychological theories in order to develop scientifically grounded and contextually appropriate interventions within each policy context. In reality, formal training in Psychology can often transmit rigid and decontextualized knowledge, thereby presenting a professional challenge in terms of organizing a practice that effectively addresses the demands of working within the public sphere.

Category 03: public management difficulties

The reports present institutions and services with different forms of execution. Although all of them have the State's execution as their centrality, public-private partnerships have been identified, a strategy adopted by some governments. This category includes difficulties arising from managerial aspects, involving the direct management of public services (coordinations and other immediate leadership positions) or other sectors of the executive and legislative branches responsible for ensuring the improvement and compliance with the legal regulations that implement and regulate each policy. The results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Public Management Difficulties

Subcategory	Documents with occurrence	
	N	%
Sectoral and intersectoral network	14	100
High demand and Service Capacity	11	78.5
Employment contracts	9	64.3
Remuneration	8	57.1
Territorial decentralization	7	50
Civil service entrance examination	7	50
Existence and enforcement of laws	7	50
Rotation	6	42.8
Interference of local political power	6	42.8
Financing and investment	5	35.7
Service autonomy	4	28.5
Bureaucracy	3	24.4
Role deviations	3	24.4
Managers' knowledge of the policy	3	24.4
User support	2	14.3
Intermittency of services	2	14.3
Total documents with category occurrence	14	100

Source: the authors (2024).

Difficulties related to management were consistently highlighted in the analyzed reports and were also the category with the highest frequency of occurrence. Among the challenges identified, problems associated with the sectoral and intersectoral network stood out, characterized by barriers in the referral processes, matrix support, and case follow-up within and between services operating within the same policy or across different public policies. Specific issues included poor articulation, weak sectoral and intersectoral relationships, reliance on informal and personal contacts due to the absence of established protocols, professionals' limited knowledge about the network, inadequate communication with secretaries, and challenges in monitoring referrals.

The second most frequently mentioned issue was the mismatch between the extent of the demand and the service's capacity to meet it, often leading to overcrowding. This situation reflects the scarcity of human and material resources and management policies that fail to anticipate and address this scenario. In particular, the shortage of psychologists on the staff was highlighted, with some services having only one professional responsible for meeting the demand of an entire municipality. This imbalance between the demand for services and the available workforce poses significant challenges to the effective delivery of psychological services in public policies.

Human resource management aspects were also emphasized in the reports. Complaints were raised regarding the precariousness of employment relationships, inadequate remuneration considering the significance and workload, as well as the limited number of public tenders, resulting in a high turnover of professionals. When working in the community, establishing a connection between the team and the community is crucial. However, this is hindered by the frequent turnover of professionals and the lack of employment stability. As a result, some professionals end up assuming responsibilities that are beyond their original job description, leading to role deviations.

In addition to the challenges in personnel management, professionals also raise concerns about the territorial aspect of service provision. They highlight the lack of adequate services that cater to rural areas, as most of the services are predominantly focused on urban regions. Furthermore, it has been observed that in the countryside there is a shortage of services, with a concentration of resources and facilities in the capital cities and larger urban centers. This uneven distribution of services creates barriers to access and hinders the provision of comprehensive care to individuals residing in rural and remote areas.

The interference of local government in the implementation of public policies is identified as a significant barrier. Often, there is a misalignment between the objectives established in legal guidelines and the actions taken by local authorities. Excessive bureaucracy, inadequate investment, and insufficient

financing of the public sector further exacerbate these challenges, hindering the efficiency and effectiveness of work processes. As a consequence, services may become intermittent, with operations being halted due to management decisions or budgetary constraints. Additionally, the lack of attention to user needs, including crucial aspects such as transportation assistance to ensure their continued access to services, has been highlighted. These factors significantly impact the autonomy and quality of services, preventing them from fully achieving their intended objectives due to management-related obstacles.

The professionals highlighted the limited knowledge of management personnel regarding public policies, which can be attributed to the appointment of individuals based on political affiliations rather than their technical competence. The involvement of psychologists in the management of services and public policies is still relatively new and less developed compared to their involvement in service provision/assistance. This lack of involvement distances the profession from decision-making processes and hinders the development of practices and theories related to this field. However, topics such as intersectionality and the coordination of the public policy network have received attention and investigation (Carmo & Guizardi, 2017). The difficulties in coordinating services within a policy, as well as between different public policies, have been emphasized. It is recognized that strengthening the network is essential for achieving the state's objective of providing comprehensive care to citizens, a goal that directly relates to the role of psychology.

The quality of services provided is closely linked to working conditions and well-defined action protocols. Recognizing this relationship, there have been discussions among professional boards, social control councils, and unions regarding these issues. Jacinto (2021) emphasizes that addressing these challenges requires greater political engagement by psychologists in councils, negotiation tables, public hearings, and other institutional spaces. The author also highlights the importance of dialogue between managers, as it is often observed that municipal and state administrations may be unprepared due to a lack of understanding of the realities of each public service.

Thus, coordination of these services should clarify the objectives, possibilities, and limitations of collaboration within the network. By actively participating and advocating for these changes, the field of psychology can contribute to improving the overall effectiveness and quality of public policies and services.

Category 04: issues with infrastructure and human resources

It has been decided to differentiate this category from the previous one, highlighting the concrete implications of financing and service execution, with a particular emphasis on the objective impacts observed in institutions, specifically in the areas of infrastructure and human resources. As shown in Table 5, difficulties related to physical working conditions and personnel availability are highlighted.

Table 5. Issues with Infrastructure and Human Resources

Subcategory	Documents with occurrence	
	N	%
Material resources	12	85.7
Physical infrastructure	7	50
Adequate working conditions	4	28.5
Human resources	3	24.4
Total documents with category occurrence	13	92.8

Source: the authors (2024).

According to the reports, professionals frequently mentioned inadequate physical infrastructure for carrying out their activities. These issues included security problems, lack of ventilation, and poor maintenance of the environment. Additionally, there were instances of idle facilities and a lack of appropriate workspaces. Notably, the sports policies were highlighted, as they require courts and gymnasiums for effective practice. The documents indicate a direct correlation between the quality of the provided service and the condition of the infrastructure, with the lack of resources leading to subpar service delivery to users and their families. Insufficient human resources further contribute to this situation, as the absence of complete teams hinders multidisciplinary work in joint workshops and reinforces a model of individualized work in Psychology.

One of the most frequently discussed points was the lack of material resources, including inadequate provisions of materials for recreational activities, stationery, office supplies, and particularly materials for Psychological Assessment. Another recurring challenge identified was the insufficiency of resources to conduct home visits, such as the availability of cars or gas, which hampers an essential strategy for effectively engaging in public policies. Home visits are regarded as a means to establish closer connections between professionals and users, thereby enhancing the quality of the services provided.

Category 05: professional ethics concerns

The final category, although not numerically significant compared to the others, pertains to ethical issues encountered by psychologists in their work contexts. This aspect is crucial, as the analyzed interview scripts that formed the basis of the reports explicitly address questions regarding ethical dilemmas and strategies for addressing them. However, as depicted in Table 6, there was limited variability in the results within this category.

Table 6. Professional ethics concerns

Subcategory	Documents with occurrence	
	N	%
Prejudice and discrimination	8	57.1
Professional confidentiality	3	24.4
Total documents with category occurrence	8	57.1

Source: the authors (2024).

In this field, the main occurrence was the reference to difficulties found by professionals when faced with situations involving prejudice or acts of discrimination against users or other aspects related to public policy. As stated in the Code of Professional Ethics of the Psychologist (CFP, 2005b), the practice or connivance with any acts of negligence, discrimination, exploitation, violence, cruelty or oppression is considered as an offense subject to disciplinary action by part of the Psychology Counseling System.

Prejudice against service users was identified as a significant issue, particularly in contexts involving the justice system, such as the implementation of socio-educational measures, the prison system, and shelter services for women experiencing violence. Similar situations were observed in mental health services. Furthermore, broader issues of prejudice against the LGBTQIA+ community and institutional racism were raised, extending beyond individual actions. Professionals noted difficulties in engaging with society when providing services specifically for the LGBTQIA+ population, as they believed the topic to be a societal taboo. The social demands faced by populations utilizing public policies can be burdened with stigmas that perpetuate prejudices. Studies focusing on illicit drug users, individuals with mental health conditions, and people living with HIV, for instance, have revealed instances of discrimination occurring within services, not solely external to society, emphasizing the need to address and challenge discriminatory practices (Cândido et al., 2012; Garbin et al., 2017). In the field of social assistance, this issue prompted a campaign by the Brazilian Federal Council of Psychology (CFP) in partnership with the National Forum of Social Assistance Users (FNUSUAS) to combat prejudice against SUAS users.

Lastly, the issue of professional confidentiality was also discussed. The preservation of confidentiality is threatened by the challenges previously mentioned, such as difficulties in teamwork or inadequate work environments that do not provide adequate measures, such as acoustic insulation, to protect the privacy of confidential conversations. It is worth noting that despite the significance of this topic, professional confidentiality was only explicitly mentioned in two of the analyzed documents.

Conclusion

This study aimed to identify the primary challenges reported by Psychology professionals working within public policies. It relied on documentary analysis, specifically materials from research conducted by the Regional Psychology Council of the 3rd Region in Bahia (CRP-03) through the Technical Reference Center in Psychology and Public Policies (CREPOP). The research involved qualitative interviews with professionals in the field, providing valuable insights into their experiences and perspectives.

The analysis indicates that Psychology's involvement in public policies is a relatively new development, placing the profession in a field that is still in the process of being shaped. In addition to the broader challenges faced within the Brazilian public context, such as limited funding, inadequate continuing education policies, and excessive bureaucracy, Psychology encounters specific barriers in applying its knowledge within the realm of public policy. The recognition and validation of Psychology's contributions to public policies by managers and interdisciplinary teams also pose challenges to the profession's integration and impact in this context.

The findings presented in this study can provide valuable insights for managers, professional councils, and educational institutions to take appropriate actions. The goal is to equip Psychology professionals with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively engage in diverse contexts, particularly in light of the recent approval of the new National Curriculum Guidelines, which emphasize the importance of

recognizing the distinctiveness of Psychology as a science and profession. These guidelines reinforce the significance of Psychology's integration into public policies. Such efforts are seen as a means to strengthen Psychology's dedication to promoting citizenship and human rights.

Authors contributions

The authors declared that they have made substantial contributions to the work in terms of the conception or design of the research; the acquisition, analysis or interpretation of data for the work; and the writing or critical review for relevant intellectual content. All authors approved the final version to be published and agreed to take public responsibility for all aspects of the study.

Conflicts of interest

No financial, legal, or political conflicts involving third parties (government, private companies, and foundations, etc.) were declared for any aspect of the submitted work (including but not limited to grants and funding, advisory board participation, study design, manuscript preparation, statistical analysis, etc.).

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