

Original Article

Repercussions of the water advocacy on the collective well-being of MODATIMA Santiago: ethnographic approaches from a decolonial ecofeminist perspective of collective occupations

Repercusiones de la defensoría por las aguas en el bienestar colectivo de MODATIMA Santiago: aproximaciones etnográficas desde una perspectiva ecofeminista decolonial de ocupaciones colectivas

Repercussões da defesa da água no bem-estar coletivo de MODATIMA Santiago: aproximações etnográficas a partir de uma perspectiva ecofeminista decolonial das ocupações coletivas

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Abstract

Introduction: The article discusses the relationship between ecology and human occupations from occupational therapy and occupational science, recognizing the role played by organizations defending the human right to water in the socio-environmental advocacy. **Objective:** Analyzing the motivations and repercussions of the water advocacy on the personal health and well-being of the MODATIMA Santiago, Chile, collectivity, as well as characterize their collective actions and strategies in the face of the water conflict from a decolonial ecofeminist perspective, and collective occupations. **Method:** Qualitative, critical, and feminist research, of exploratory type, which included two group interviews and a process of participant observation of the group's activities in Santiago de Chile, during the year 2022. **Results:** The MODATIMA Santiago socio-environmental advocacy collectivity

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has various motivations to organize, for which they have created public, educational, institutional, and organizational action strategies to face the current and future repercussions of the water crisis on their territories, which has had a negative impact on their health and well-being. **Conclusions:** The socio-environmental advocacy can be understood as a collective occupation articulated toward the demand for human rights, stressing the anthropocentric and individualist understandings of human occupation.

Keywords: Occupational Therapy, Feminism, Human Rights, Policy, Water Insecurity.

Resumen

Introducción: El artículo discute la relación entre la ecología y las ocupaciones humanas desde terapia ocupacional y ciencia de la ocupación, reconociendo el rol que cumplen organizaciones defensoras del derecho humano al agua en la defensa socio-ambiental. **Objetivo:** Analizar las motivaciones y repercusiones de la defensoría por las aguas en la salud y bienestar del colectivo MODATIMA Santiago, Chile, así como caracterizar sus acciones y estrategias colectivas ante los conflictos hídricos desde una perspectiva ecofeminista decolonial y de ocupaciones colectivas. **Método:** Investigación cualitativa, crítica y feminista, de tipo exploratoria, que incluyó dos entrevistas grupales y un proceso de observación participante de actividades del colectivo en Santiago de Chile, durante el año 2022. **Resultados:** La defensoría socio-ambiental de MODATIMA Santiago cuenta con diversas motivaciones para organizarse, por lo que han creado estrategias de acción pública, educativa, institucional y organizacional ante las repercusiones actuales y futuras de la crisis hídrica sobre sus territorios, lo que ha tenido incidencia sobre su salud y bienestar. **Conclusiones:** La defensoría socio-ambiental puede ser comprendida como una ocupación colectiva articulada en función de la exigencia de los derechos humanos, tensionando las comprensiones antropocéntricas e individualistas de la ocupación humana.

Palabras-clave: Terapia Ocupacional, Feminismo, Derechos Humanos, Política, Inseguridad Hídrica.

Resumo

Introdução: O artigo discute a relação entre ecologia e ocupações humanas a partir da terapia ocupacional e da ciência ocupacional, reconhecendo o papel desempenhado por organizações defensoras do direito humano à água na defesa socioambiental. **Objetivo:** Analisar as motivações e repercussões da defesa da água na saúde e no bem-estar do coletivo MODATIMA Santiago, Chile, bem como caracterizar suas ações e estratégias coletivas diante dos conflitos hídricos a partir de uma perspectiva ecofeminista decolonial e das ocupações coletivas. **Método:** Pesquisa qualitativa, crítica e feminista, de tipo exploratório, que incluiu duas entrevistas em grupo e um processo de observação participante das atividades do coletivo em Santiago, Chile, durante o ano de 2022. **Resultados:** O escritório de defesa socioambiental da MODATIMA Santiago possui diversas motivações para se organizarem, por isso criaram estratégias de ação pública, educativa, institucional e organizacional diante das repercussões atuais e futuras da crise hídrica em seus territórios, o que impactou sua saúde e bem-estar. **Conclusões:** A defesa

socioambiental pode ser entendida como uma ocupação coletiva articulada a partir da reivindicação dos direitos humanos, enfatizando compreensões antropocêntricas e individualistas da ocupação humana.

Palavras-chave: Terapia Ocupacional, Feminismo, Direitos Humanos, Política, Insegurança Hídrica.

Introduction

In recent years, the ecological crisis has emerged as an important geopolitical and socio-environmental problem (Bolados García et al., 2017a; Ortega-Ramírez, 2021), mainly due to its effects on the lives of human beings, ecosystems and the diverse forms of life that inhabit the planet (Heredia et al., 2011; Marques & Schmitt, 2021). One of its expressions has been the current water crisis, which hinders access to water, and thus affects the health and well-being of many communities in the world (Ribeiro do Nascimento, 2018; Vollrath Ramirez et al., 2022). To address this, different international policies and guidelines¹ have been developed to reduce the impact of the ecological crisis on the health of populations, promoting the role of civil society in issues related to global warming (Heredia et al., 2011; Villar, 2007). However, with regard to the human right to water, there are still structural obstacles that prevent equitable and fair access (Mundaca, 2014), since the water crisis, in addition to being a problem derived from sanitation and mega-droughts typical of global warming (Biblioteca del Congreso Nacional, 2024), also results from sociopolitical and historical conflicts. In the case of Latin America, they are related to the persistent colonial forms of extractivism and global neoliberalism (Bolados García et al., 2017b; Mundaca, 2014). These models, supported by intense industrialization and exploitation of nature for commercial purposes, generate exacerbated economic growth based on capital accumulation processes and exports of common goods² (Azamar & Ponce, 2015; Panez-Pinto et al., 2017; Svampa, 2019).

In the case of Chile, this is legislatively supported by the still-current 1980 Constitution and the 1981 Water Code —both drafted during the civil-military dictatorship—, which allow the privatization and commercialization of water rights and, consequently, their overexploitation (Bolados García, 2016; Mundaca, 2014; Panez-Pinto et al., 2017). In this way, the privileged use of water by private and foreign companies has displaced the human right to water of people and communities, forcing those who experience these problems to take responsibility for the water crisis, modifying their daily habits and ways of life in order to cope with - and survive - the ecological crisis and conflicts over access to water (Bolados García et al., 2017a;

¹ Faced with these scenarios, international organizations such as the United Nations (UN) recognize urgent challenges in the face of ecological crises and their relationship with poverty, inequality and health (Organización de las Naciones Unidas, 2020). Thus, one of its objectives refers to sanitation and sustainable water management, given that it is “essential not only for health, but also for poverty reduction, food security, peace and human rights, ecosystems and education” (Organización de las Naciones Unidas, 2020, p. 36).

² The term “common goods” refers to those elements of nature on which we depend as human beings, which cannot be appropriated and which we must care for and respect. From now on, this term will be used in order to transition to a political positioning of nature, which goes beyond the Western view of nature as a resource for human consumption.

Mundaca, 2014; Torres-Salinas et al., 2017). These situations have been vigorously and systematically denounced by communities and organized groups that daily face the repercussions and threats of the water crisis, such as the Movement for the Advocacy for Access to Water, Land and Environmental Protection (hereinafter, MODATIMA). This Chilean socio-environmental movement is organized by and for communities, with the aim of making visible the fundamentals of environmental protection and human rights, as well as demanding compliance with the right to water as a basic universal guarantee for peoples. After its national meeting held in 2022, its Spokespersons and National Board were made up of 80% women (Movimiento de Defensa por el Acceso al Agua, la Tierra y la Protección del Medioambiente, 2022), which allows us to recognize the leading role of women in its organization.

It is worrying to recognize how these socio-environmental activists face political persecution and intimidation, which is seen in the constant threats that environmental activists receive as a result of defending the common goods of nature (by Luis Romero, 2020; Global Witness, 2021; Universal Rights Group, 2018). This puts their health, well-being, and even their lives at risk; for example, in the specific case of MODATIMA, the former spokesperson and current governor of the Valparaíso Region, Rodrigo Mundaca, has publicly expressed that he has received intimidation that includes death threats (Centro de Derechos Humanos, 2020). Likewise, the leader Verónica Vilches has been exposed to attacks against her integrity, and has also been threatened with death on repeated occasions (Diario Universidad de Chile, 2021a, 2021b; Timm Hidalgo, 2018). In this case, considering the significant participation of women in the advocacy for the environment and water, it should be noted that they are the ones who are especially exposed to this kind of threats and intimidation, given their leading role in the management, use and protection of water in their homes, communities and territories (Bolados García et al., 2017b; Luis Romero, 2020; Ulloa, 2016; Timm Hidalgo, 2018).

Faced with this problem, some social science professions have built a link between the water crisis, environmental advocacy, and the repercussions that these have on health and well-being, as well as on the daily lives of socio-environmental defenders. Particularly in Chile, these approaches are still limited and emerging, highlighting research on organized communities facing conflicts over water in the province of Petorca in the Valparaíso Region, and others that present the leading participation of women from MODATIMA in the same region (Bolados García et al., 2017b; Rojas Vilches, 2021). As for occupational therapy, it has not had specific approaches to the water crisis, which can be understood as an occupational problem³. The first academic researches that address issues of the ecological crisis at the beginning of the 21st century arise mainly in countries of the North and Europe (Persson & Erlandsson, 2002; Wilcock, 2006; Hudson & Aoyama, 2008). Among them, we highlight the proposal of Persson & Erlandsson (2002) towards the theoretical conceptualization of occupation as

³ When searching in databases such as the *Red Iberoamericana de Innovación y Conocimiento*, in disciplinary journals such as the *Revista Chilena de Terapia Ocupacional*, *Revista de Ocupación Humana*, *Revista TOG (A Coruña)* and *Revista de Estudiantes de Terapia Ocupacional (RETO)*, in repositories such as Dialnet, Repositorio Académico de la Universidad de Chile and SciELO, between the months of January and April, we have not found works from Occupational Therapy or Occupational Science published between 2016 and 2022 that link the effects of the water crisis on the health and well-being of communities along with a collective organization as a response. This is why we had to broaden the search to research that, on one hand, linked the discipline with the ecological crisis, and on the other hand, worked with groups of people organized in the face of this crisis.

“ecopation”. On the other hand, Wilcock (2006) proposes an eco-sustainable community development approach focused on occupation, for an approach to health from the promotion of ecologically sustainable policies and community actions; while Hudson & Aoyama (2008) refer that occupational therapy knowledge could be used to stop the crisis through practical models that highlight human-ecological relationships through occupation. On the other hand, particularly from the South, Méndez's (2011) understanding of occupation as an ecological process stands out, where the various forms of expression of human activities have a direct and dependent relationship with the ecosystem.

It is important to highlight that in 2012 the World Federation of Occupational Therapists (WFOT) published a statement on climate change and the role of occupational therapy in this subject, showing the importance of occupational therapists rethinking their professional reasoning about occupational performance to promote environmental sustainability through occupation with people and communities (Federación Mundial de Terapeutas Ocupacionales, 2012). Based on this statement, it is possible to recognize a greater proliferation of studies focused on this topic (Cantero, 2020; Dennis et al., 2015; Joubert, 2020; Silva & Dutra et al., 2018; Whittaker, 2012), as well as research that resumes the theoretical development that links occupational therapy and Occupational Science (hereinafter, OC) with the ecological crisis, proposing concepts such as occupational ecology, ecopation, and eco-social occupational therapy (Persson & Erlandsson, 2014; Simó Algado, 2012, 2016; Simó & Abregú, 2015; Simó Algado & Townsend, 2015).

From Latin America, there are emerging proposals from occupational therapy to approach ecological crises locally, which promotes an articulation of knowledge towards and with communities. These approaches expose different approaches to the traditional ones, detailing ecological and community challenges that go beyond those exposed by the Federación Mundial de Terapeutas Ocupacionales (2012). From Brazil, Farias & Faleiro (2019) emphasize the importance of occupational therapy being linked to other areas of knowledge, to develop a discipline that considers colonial and sociocultural aspects of the Latin American territory, and contribute to overcoming the effects of the ecological crisis beyond the individual. Valderrama Núñez et al. (2022, p. 2) studies collective occupations from a decolonial perspective in rural communities in southern Chile, based on the premise that these “are closely linked to nature”, analyzing the juxtaposed processes of domination of capitalism, colonialism and patriarchy. On the other hand, we recognize in this line the research of Valderrama Núñez et al. (2019), which assumes the importance of occupational therapy being linked to collective struggles to overcome different common ailments and contributes to movements for the right to health and well-being.

The approaches presented allow us to recognize how health and well-being processes are subordinated by various relations of domination that construct the occupational scenarios of people, groups and communities. Nonetheless, most of these investigations represent practices framed exclusively in health devices, with postulates in which a consideration of an individual change in occupations prevails in order to assume the effects of the ecological crisis. On the other hand, there are no disciplinary investigations reported that are linked to groups organized for the advocacy for socio-environmental rights, such as the human right to water.

For the above, we highlight the importance of studying from occupational therapy how the ecological crisis - in this particular case in its water dimension - affects the daily life, health and well-being of communities and groups organized for the advocacy and recovery of water, as is the case of MODATIMA. We assume the need to approach the problem raised from a situated perspective from a decolonial ecofeminist perspective that recognizes its matrix of capitalist-patriarchal-colonial-extractivist domination (Ayala et al., 2017), as well as the possible collective identities that are configured as a result of the organization in advocacy for natural common goods and socio-environmental justice. In light of this, we ask ourselves: How has water advocacy impacted the health and well-being of MODATIMA Santiago, from a perspective of decolonial ecofeminisms and collective occupations?

Based on this question, the objective of this study was to analyze the motivations and repercussions of water advocacy on the health and well-being of the MODATIMA Santiago collective, as well as to characterize their collective actions and strategies in the face of water conflicts from a decolonial ecofeminist and collective occupation perspective.

Theoretical Perspectives

From our decolonial ecofeminist position, we will discuss the importance of moving from an anthropocentric perspective of occupation to one that recognizes our double condition of ecodependence and interdependence to exist and fulfill ourselves. In addition, we will discuss the connection between the conceptualization of collective occupations with collective health, in recognition of that Latin American tradition that studies how political and socio-environmental processes condition the well-being of people and communities.

About the anthropocentric nature of occupation

Occupational therapy has traditionally defined occupation as those “[...] personalized daily activities that people carry out as individuals, in families, and with communities to use the time and give meaning and purpose to life” (American Occupational Therapy Association, 2020, p. 80), articulating a relationship between people, their activities, and their realization in the environment. The relationships that each person establishes, traditionally studied from the triad of person, environment and occupation (American Occupational Therapy Association, 2020) have been deepened from different disciplinary and epistemological approaches, highlighting an origin framed in a humanistic philosophy (Rocha, 2008). Although in its beginnings occupational therapy was an instrument for biomedical scientific work, such training focused only on what concerns the human being, that is, “[...] what interests it about biology is its human dimension” (Rocha, 2008, p. 18). However, by focusing on what is essentially human, the conceptions of occupation have been raised from the humanistic assumption of human beings as capable of building society, ordering the world and producing above - and at the expense of - nature (Rocha, 2008). We assume this assumption as an anthropocentric perspective of occupation, since it presents us with a world organized from human supremacy and, as a consequence, understands

occupation as an intrinsic and strictly human phenomenon, without considering an ecological understanding that recognizes us as beings conditioned by our ecosystem.

On the other hand, Méndez (2011) has problematized the idea of occupation as something merely human, to propose it as an ecological process in which the different expressions of occupations, both singular and collective, have a direct relationship with the ecosystem and generate relationships of mutual dependence. Therefore, it must be understood as a complex and territorial process in which the relationship between people, communities and nature is culturally, economically, politically, historically, socially, temporally, spatially and ecologically determined. Therefore, the author states that what we have called the environment is more than a scenario with barriers and facilitators where occupation takes place; the occupations affect the environment, instead, which in turn presents material limits to sustain human activities (Méndez, 2011). In this sense, the inappropriate and extractive use of natural common goods resulting from policies focused on economic and “human” development over the well-being of the planet and its communities, constitute a threat to life and, therefore, to any possible human activity or occupation (Méndez, 2011).

On the other hand, Valderrama Núñez & Lara Riquelme (2013) argument that human occupations are constituted by material and concrete relations of existence: thus, the possibility of being, thinking and doing will depend on the opportunities that a society allows for occupation, which requires analyzing “[...] the power relations and the social conditions to which individuals are subjected” (Valderrama Núñez & Lara Riquelme, 2013, p. 10). This perspective allows us to recognize that the possibilities of occupation, whether to reproduce or transform the conditions of existence, not only depend on the aptitude of people, but also on the relations that are established in daily life and that configure the conditions for life. To the above, we can add that our anthropocentrism has led us to think that technological and scientific development built by human beings could free us from our dependence on nature, ignoring that the Earth also conditions our existence (Simó Algado, 2016). Based on all of the above, we question the idea that human beings are built exclusively through their own activity, undertaken individually or collectively, since our experience as human beings is not modulated exclusively by the power relations that organize our society, its institutions and laws, but we also depend on the relations that we establish with nature and its preservation. Therefore, to overcome an anthropocentric vision of human occupation, we need to consider how the social crisis and the ecological crisis determine activity, life and well-being (Simó Algado, 2016). In addition to this, we need to approach the collective sociopolitical interactions and actions that people and communities carry out to defend the sustainability of life, health and well-being (Da Rozario, 1993 as cited in Simó Algado, 2016).

Fair and necessary: an ecofeminist decolonial reading of socio-environmental advocacy

In order to deepen a critical, political and ecological perspective on the occupation, we will discuss some of the criticisms that Southern feminisms and decolonial ecofeminisms have made towards the dualistic-binary predominance of the human being over nature (Svampa, 2015; Herrero, 2017a), as well as the exploitation of

territories and bodies that the capitalist, patriarchal, colonial, racist and extractivist system has sustained in Latin America (Ayala et al., 2017; Parra-Romero, 2016). Authors such as Svampa (2015) criticize anthropocentric views on the domination of nature and the traditional presentation of the ecological crisis as a social crisis problematized exclusively from the “human” perspective. This anthropocentric character organizes interpersonal relationships and relationships with nature based on logics of domination anchored in a dichotomous vision that the capitalist-patriarchal system maintains to define and generate hierarchical and binary relationships typical of the patriarchal structure. Thus, in this type of system there is not only a relationship of domination towards women, but also towards nature and territories (Herrero, 2017b).

Capitalist exploitation and globalized consumption have exposed the irrationality of the current economic system, which is based on a paradigm of infinite growth, prioritizing production and displacing the sustainability of life and the care of nature, without considering our eco and interdependence. These conceptualizations have been developed by ecofeminists such as Herrero (2017a, 2017b), who explains that humans are living beings subject to the biophysical limits of ecosystems, so our lives depend on biodiversity, which is known as ecodependence. Likewise, it points out that interdependent relationships between human beings are essential for survival, highlighting the fundamental nature of affection and care, which have historically been covered by feminized bodies. In this sense, it is also recognized that the feminization of care is not essentially or biologically determined, but is culturally constructed, which is also seen in the feminization and female protagonism in the struggles of socio-environmental movements (Svampa, 2015). In parallel, feminist economics also denounces the exploitation of women and nature through the appropriation of reproductive, community, invisible and unpaid work by capitalist systems, which is related to all actions associated with the reproduction and sustainability of life, such as “[...] raising, resolving basic needs, promoting health, emotional support, facilitating social participation, etc.” (Svampa, 2015, p. 130).

In light of the above, decolonial feminist perspectives propose a *decolonial turn* that is capable of recognizing the complex structures of the socioeconomic system, as capitalist, patriarchal, colonialist, racist and anthropocentric (Parra-Romero, 2016; Ayala et al., 2017; Nogales, 2017), to observe how extractive forms of oppression are constructed and promoted, which, by prioritizing enrichment and accumulation over the sustainability of life and good living, affect and even end all forms of life.

Well-being from collective health and collective occupations

Following the proposal of Valderrama Núñez & Lara Riquelme (2013), we recognize that the material limits of existence are generated in the interrelation with other people and the environment, which encourages understanding the advocacy for water as a collective phenomenon that occurs in a specific territory. Thus, in addition to the natural limits of the common goods, the main barriers to access to water result from the neoliberal model and extractivism (Mundaca, 2014; Acevedo-Castillo et al., 2020; Aguilar, 2020), which prioritizes commodification over the human right to water, derived from the protection of other guarantees such as the right to health and human rights (Ribeiro do Nascimento, 2018). Given this relationship between the neoliberal

system and the health of communities, it is urgent to go beyond empirical epidemiology and approach explanations that articulate the social system, ways of living and health from critical perspectives as proposed by Collective Health (hereinafter, CH). This assumes the complex relationship between society and nature and “[...] the differential vulnerability of groups located in different social insertions” (Breilh, 2013, p. 15), recognizing how health is a human right that derives from an articulation between technical, ideological, political and economic practices, in a contextual and historical way (Liborio, 2013). Along these lines, it perceives individuals as social bodies beyond the biological (Silva Norambuena, 2021) and recognizes their social and historical determination, where class, ethnicity, gender, work, ecological and other conditions will restrict (or not) the processes of health and well-being, having consequences on their ways of life (Breilh, 2013). Thus, it is understood that difficulties in accessing water and its resulting situations not only generate social injustices and problems with health and well-being, but also violate human rights (Oficina del Alto Comisionado de las Naciones Unidas para los Derechos Humanos, 2011) and the rights of nature (Breilh, 2013). In this way, CH allows us to approach contextual conditions and their profound implications for human occupation (Guajardo et al., 2015), since socio-political and ecological problems are not abstract and, therefore, the dynamic transition between discomfort and well-being is not either. From occupational therapy, authors have conceptualized the phenomenon of organized communities in the face of discomfort resulting from rights violations (Guajardo et al., 2015), highlighting among these proposals the notion of collective occupations (Ramugondo & Kronenberg, 2013; Palacios, 2015).

We understand *collective occupations* as forms of interaction in everyday life, which generate a territorial and collective identity (Ramugondo & Kronenberg, 2013; Palacios, 2015), through which we can explore the interconnection between the individual and the collective “[...] bridging the dichotomy which often presents these entities as opposed to each other” (Ramugondo & Kronenberg, 2013, p. 4)⁴. In this way, occupying oneself collectively offers possibilities to transform the collectivity of people who are and are realized with others in a territory; understood as a space of daily life in which one participates collectively, building relationships and meanings, through a sense of belonging, influence, participation, satisfaction of needs and shared emotional connection (Palacios, 2015). In this way, in addition to contextualizing human activity culturally, spatially, temporally, politically and ecologically, *collective occupations* (as a concept) allow us to propose an analysis of collective human activities that are intentionally constituted in a territory in the face of a problem shared on a daily basis and that affects the well-being of the community (Palacios, 2015; Valderrama Núñez et al., 2019).

Methodology

This research is positioned from a *critical* paradigm, which by understanding social reality as historically produced, raises awareness of how the sociopolitical system has influenced the production of social problems, in order to contribute to their

⁴ Quote from the original text.

transformation (Guba & Lincoln, 2002). This paradigm is characterized by understanding people as individuals of knowledge and experience, with the potential to think and act, generating a displacement of the passive and instrumental place that modern science has relegated to them (Tabares, 2019). Furthermore, from a feminist position we recognize that all knowledge is always partial and situated (Haraway, 1995) and, therefore, requires that we assume the responsibility of occupying a —impossibly neutral— place in the production of knowledge. This position implies assuming those limitations well described by decolonial feminist theorists when they recognize that “[...] our allusions to diversity must be reexamined in light of the coloniality of power and the coloniality of gender, taking into account our own place in the system of internal colonization” (Espinosa Miñoso, 2010, p.35).

Regarding the methodological approach, this research is framed as qualitative since it aims to investigate the subjective experience, in this case, of a socio-environmental advocacy group “[...] respecting and incorporating what the research participants say, think and feel, as well as their experiences, attitudes, beliefs and reflections as they say it” (Delgado Ballesteros, 2012, p.199). The design is exploratory, since it is a research topic that has been scarcely studied from the occupational therapy perspective and we recognize a disciplinary gap that needs to be investigated. We carried out an *ethnographic approach*⁵, since ethnography is constituted as a method to understand the social organization and daily life of social sectors, the relationships that are established and the meaning that people and communities give to their lives (Antolínez et al., 2019; Cardós García et al., 2016; Duranti, 2000). In this way, by participating in MODATIMA Santiago's field activities, this approach allowed us to understand the collective's experience in a situated and particular way by approaching its cultural and organizational forms of connection and work.

Regarding the techniques of information production, we used a *multi-methodological approach* that allowed us to build a more comprehensive and complex vision of the processes around water advocacy through a participatory methodology of research and learning (Mora-Ríos & Flores, 2012). As a main technique, we used the group interview, which seeks to access the social discourse of the people interviewed, enabling and stimulating interaction between them (Salinas, 2009). As a secondary tool, we used participant observation to actively engage in the field of study and produce information from the daily life of the collective (Mora-Ríos & Flores, 2012).

We carried out an intentional non-probabilistic sampling, through a key informant who facilitated contact with the MODATIMA Santiago collective, which met the criteria of: belonging to the Metropolitan Region, declaring the advocacy for the right to water as an objective, carrying out collective practices in the face of the water crisis, and being willing to facilitate and/or participate in activities open to the community. We had a first contact through social networks and a subsequent presentation of the research project that allowed the participation of 11 people from the collective (6 men and 5 women), with an age range between 22-47 years, divided without distinction of gender in two group interviews carried out virtually through the Zoom platform in October 2022. In this group, only one person experienced daily problems accessing

⁵ Our research is declared as an ethnographic approach since it constitutes an incipient approach, carried out in a limited time and that can be developed to greater complexity and depth.

water, while the rest participated in the core without yet perceiving these effects in their immediate and direct daily lives. As for the instances of participant observation, these included the distribution of information pamphlets on water conflicts and the constitutional proposal⁶, fairs for organizations, workshops, schools and collective training days. The information obtained in the group interviews, recorded and transcribed, was triangulated with a compilation of the field notes produced during the days of participant observation by the executing researchers, to carry out a subsequent qualitative analysis of the content of all this material (Bardin, 1991).

Regarding ethical considerations, this research has as its fundamental principle the respect and dignity of the participants (Instituto Nacional de Derechos Humanos, 2015), in accordance with Emanuel's Seven Ethical Requirements (Emanuel, 2003), safeguarding the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants, through the anonymization of personal data. However, considering the political action for socio-environmental advocacy, MODATIMA Santiago decided to be named explicitly for the purpose of making its work visible. The storage and access to the information was exclusively managed by the researchers in charge and shared only with the main organization. Likewise, we carried out an informed consent process with the participants, resolving doubts and agreeing on consensus on forms of compensation, times to carry out the research, among other aspects. Finally, this research was supervised and approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Chile, and was registered as Project No. 109-2022.

Results

From the information produced, we found that MODATIMA Santiago's experience of socio-environmental advocacy converges in *motivations for collective organization, action strategies, and repercussions on the movement's health and well-being*, categories that will be described below.

Motivations for collective organization: “That conviction of wanting things to change”

Participants present MODATIMA Santiago as a socio-environmental advocacy organization in the face of the water crisis experienced in the Metropolitan Region, formed shortly after the initial cell founded in Petorca⁷, Valparaíso Region. Since then, MODATIMA Santiago has spread throughout the region, making visible the community problems associated with the socio-environmental crisis in the city of Santiago.

In the capital, the need to organize arose in order to strengthen the national struggle for water, as well as to visualize the emerging effects of the water crisis linked to the overpopulation of the region, accelerated growth and the absence of regulatory plans for

⁶ MODATIMA and its contribution to the campaign to approve the proposed Political Constitution of the Republic of Chile, the result of the constitutional process of the period July 2021 - September 2022.

⁷ The province of Petorca is a rural area in Chile that represents one of the territories most affected by the water crisis in the country, being a prominent locality of the megadrought, both due to the changes resulting from the current climate change, and due to the use by the private agribusiness dedicated to the production of avocados for export. (Laborde, 2022).

private business activity in the industrial, mining, real estate and health sectors, which control the common good and threaten human access to it. When investigating the main reasons and motivations of the group, we recognized a convergence on respect for nature that is transcendental and transversal among the participants.

People also highlighted circumstances in their lives where they were able to identify that the order of the neoliberal capitalist model devastates without respecting the limits of nature or the communities that inhabit the territories, as one participant said:

The water crisis is not only a result of the climate change that we have experienced globally, but also because of usufruct, especially in our country where water is commercialized, it is not minor that our country is the only one that has its water privatized (Transcript 2, p. 2).

This unfair way of managing and administering natural common goods was one of the main motivations for assuming themselves as socio-environmental defenders. Although they understand humans as beings that destroy nature, they also understand that the water crisis does not lie in the individual actions of people, but that these water and socio-environmental conflicts are the responsibility of the power groups that have the water rights and capital. In this way, although their motivations arise from personal experiences, they converge and intersect when they recognize that their problems share the same economic and political structural roots, thus forging ideals that sustain their collective practices as a movement.

To achieve these collective ideals, they have established some goals that, although they are not objectives as such, they recognize that they have been useful to establish lines of work for socio-environmental advocacy, among which are:

- Visibility of different problems that they experience locally and in other territories.
- Awareness and education of the population about socio-environmental conflicts and the water crisis.
- Education and expansion of their militancy so that all people in the cell have common training on the advocacy for water and thus consolidate their work to raise awareness in the territory.
- Recovery of the forms of face-to-face organization that were lost with the confinement due to Covid-19.
- Participation and influence in institutional decision-making and public policies to make changes that protect nature and territories affected by socio-environmental conflicts.

Action strategies: “Let’s break this logic of competitiveness and move towards cooperation”

The participants refer to public, educational, institutional and organizational actions. In the case of the former, they highlight participation in protests and mobilizations, as well as the organization of marches for the advocacy for water to make ecological problems visible and, together with other groups, to call supporters to the movement and related causes. They also mentioned the participation and involvement

in collective actions in other territories, supporting local projects of other communities to overcome their daily problems in camps and land occupations. Thus, they recognized linking and strengthening the articulation with other groups to work for common causes, breaking the logic of competitiveness typical of the neoliberal model.

Another declared strategy was socio-environmental education, highlighting popular practices of exchanging experiences and local knowledge of the territory. They acknowledge developing permanent actions to promote access to information, both in person and on social networks, facilitating through the latter the dissemination of the audiovisual material they generate and/or digitize. At this point, it is key to mention the information campaigns they carried out on the Popular Norma Initiative related to the human right to water in the proposed Constitution rejected in 2022, as well as the free delivery of books and educational materials on the water crisis and socio-environmental conflicts. In addition, the participants recognized actions at an institutional level that have allowed territorial problems and proposals to be brought to legislative and governmental scenarios, taking public positions in municipal councils and influencing the agendas of the Congress of the Republic.

To carry out these actions, this group is organized methodically through self-training and self-management, highlighting autonomous and organized work. To do this, they form interconnected commissions, in which each person contributes according to their knowledge and interests. Regarding the organizational structure, they have equal coordination and spokespersons, highlighting the leadership of those who assume these roles. Despite this organizational structure, decision-making does not follow a rigid hierarchy, referring to the fact that problems are discussed and decisions are agreed upon jointly and show us that “[regarding the leaders]... *They always try to make decisions together, respecting each other*” (Field notes, p. 40). Being a diverse collective, the time allocation for the organization is dynamic, adjusting to their paid and unpaid jobs, such as raising children, keeping the home, social participation in other organizations, etc.

From our experience, something fundamental that we recognized in their ways of working was the approach to educational processes through learning and teaching by doing, showing and following those who joined the movement how to carry out the various actions. One participant says, “*When we enter the movement, it happens, like not knowing who to talk to or how to do this [...] the idea is that we create a network to support each other. So, the oldest talk to the newest*” (Field notes, p. 51). As supporting researchers, we also had this reception and we were able to observe it with other people who joined during the period in which we collaborated.

Those of us who participated in the activities fulfilled a role according to the ways of working of the collective, which were modified according to the contextual conditions, as well as the distribution of work. This division is highlighted transversally by the cooperation of all people, without an apparent *genderization* of occupations (Grandón Valenzuela, 2019). We see this in different activities, in which the participants carry out any type of activity beyond gender roles.

On the other hand, we observe that there are key people who care for and follow the collective in general, and who break the binary logic of productive-reproductive work. Although in the period in which the research process was carried out the cell was composed of men and women in similar numbers, at the level of public and political positions the female participation stands out, which before the coordination of

MODATIMA Santiago was equal, was also seen in the internal organization of the collective. This prominence of the participating women was noted in the articulation, dissemination and management of the activities, which has been changing due to the incorporation of men to the coordination of the cell. Similarly, according to the story of some members, when they invite their colleagues to participate in public activities, they extend the logic of parity established in the collective and request the participation of their female colleagues in these instances.

Despite this rigorous way of organizing, there are factors that can act as facilitators or barriers, which influence the implementation of the collective strategies mentioned above. Among the personal factors that have a positive and negative impact, we find personal time management, compatibility with paid jobs and family life, as well as health status. They declare that there are organizational factors that have a positive influence, highlighting discipline and the form of organization, as well as others that they recognize as negative, such as not having a permanent space that allows them to meet in person. They also considered that there are facilitators and barriers—which we call structural—referring to networking and public scrutiny respectively, giving as an example of the latter that there are people who “[...] *only approach them to fight and doubt their knowledge, instead of listening*” (Field notes, pp. 38-39), making socio-environmental advocacy more adverse.

The use of spaces to organize, beyond seeing it as a facilitator or an obstacle, was presented to us as an essential emerging category, given that the activities require social and material conditions to be carried out, and despite the fact that MODATIMA Santiago does not have an established meeting place, they have been able to overcome this difficulty by using the streets and public spaces. In all the instances in which we were able to participate, we experienced how the participants managed to appropriate and inhabit the available meeting spaces, which was recorded in our field notes: “[...] *they occupy them, they inhabit them, they make them their own: with their flags, scarves, canvases*” (Field notes, p. 29).

Repercussions of advocacy for health and well-being: “Activism is an everyday thing”

Considering the large amount of work to sustain the activities described, it is necessary to delve deeper into the impact that water advocacy has generated in their lives and particularly, in their well-being and health. During the process, it was possible to see that this work affects their health, despite the fact that there is a normalization of the ailments that have arisen because of activism. Fatigue resulting from organizing was one of the most shared physical consequences, up to repercussions that included threats to the integrity of a particular person, who even required physical rehabilitation therapy. They also recognized many repercussions on their mental health, mostly due to social reactions to their activism, such as hate messages through social networks, exposure, intimidation and lack of security, situations that generated emotional complications, feelings of insecurity, overwhelm, mental fatigue, stress, persistent fears and others. On the other hand, they recognized the need to take charge of these repercussions, as well as the burden of being a socio-environmental defender, so for these people it has been necessary to develop collective strategies to support each other, avoiding re-victimization processes.

Returning to the repercussions that affect their health and well-being, they declared to be aware of the risks and exposure to different types of hostile treatment, intimidation, threats and other types of violence for assuming the role of socio-environmental defender, this being one of the highest costs they declare. They have experienced this violence directly, in physical and verbal attacks, as well as indirectly on social networks. Because of this, they have had to acquire collective and personal strategies, in order to take care of each other. Some of these strategies are to accompany each other when potentially violent situations arise, to withdraw from spaces where they are exposed, to be careful about the topics of conversation with other people and modifications in their lifestyles: where to be and with whom to associate. They also declare that “[...] *especially in Chile, activism is precarious, it is dangerous, it is very dangerous*” (Transcript 2, p. 12), not only for the reasons mentioned above, but also because it embodies situations of persecution, espionage, harassment, kidnapping and criminalization. Despite the above, it is essential to recognize that they also described positive repercussions, such as the support and emotional networks they have found in the collective and the process of transformation that belonging to the national reference movement means.

Another of the repercussions on the daily lives of the participants was related to the use of time, because socio-environmental advocacy is such an important activity in their lives that it increases their overall workload, because effectively—and as feminisms recognize—it constitutes a job:

[...] and yes, it does influence your daily life... It influences that in the end it also ends up being like a work task, you know? You schedule it, you plan it, you order it as if in addition to your work, you have this activism or this active militancy... (Transcript 1, p. 16).

This assumption of a greater overall workload has the potential to generate double and triple work days, if we also consider care work. In the specific case of paid work, we see how some of the participants have migrated to jobs that are more consistent and in keeping with their militant and politicized lifestyle, thus overcoming a problem that is already complex, just in terms of reconciling time and workdays. Likewise, there were repercussions in social dynamics, having to modify their ways of relating to their family and friends, as one participant stated:

I feel that our cost also, or the compatibility of life, work, friends, those close to us, family... it is difficult to be involved with people who do not have the same awareness. I feel that you are leaving... your circle of close people, people you trust, is shrinking (Transcript 1, p. 17).

However, they also recognized that being socio-environmental defenders has allowed them to meet other people with similar political ideals, who have become a safe space to share and connect. Linked to all of the above, they have been forced to divide their time between the different occupations they perform, including home management and care, paid employment, and socio-environmental advocacy. This has caused changes in their ways of life within their homes, such as arriving home later for activities, spending less

time with their families, simultaneously doing household chores and organizational work, or taking time off to work on militant tasks, as referred to in the following field note: “*He proposed his lunch schedule and break time in the middle of the work day to meet as soon as possible*” (Field notes, p. 3).

For the participants, being socio-environmental defenders has resulted in a transformation process that has generated changes in their way of seeing and approaching the world. This process, which they describe as a social and political awakening that is lived on a daily basis, is experienced collectively, and being able to share this path, sustains the desire to make the different areas of their lives compatible with their collective ideals and social awareness, since what motivates them and makes sense has changed. On both a personal and collective level, they are aware that their work has consequences that transcend themselves, and that they are in pursuit of a collective good, which is why they sustain their actions and practices for the common good of the territory. They understand that sociopolitical action is not that which is carried out exclusively in a political party and that MODATIMA has allowed them to experience it as a way of life.

Discussions

Based on the results, we were able to delve into how the people in the collective identify the different forms of oppression sustained by the socioeconomic and political model and the capital-patriarchal-racist and extractivist alliance (Ayala et al., 2017) that organizes our country. In the specific case of water, MODATIMA Santiago recognizes that the processes of privatization, commodification and usurpation of the common good are a reflection of the Water Code as a legal framework that supports the neoliberal model and protects foreign and extractivist industrial practices in Latin American territories that enrich privileged groups (Mundaca, 2014; García Nemocón et al., 2021; Bolados García, 2016; Panes-Pinto et al., 2017).

Given the complexity of this problem, they assume that the struggle is difficult - if not impossible - to sustain individually, making it necessary to link up and organize. In this way, personal experiences and stories intersect and forge a collective process: “*They are small drops that here in Santiago are tremendously important to us [...] and that continue to add to this channel that has been growing over the years*” (Transcript 2, p. 6). MODATIMA Santiago presents that it is impossible to understand ourselves as subjects “disconnected” from each other and nature. For this reason, a more complex reading is required with respect to interactions in nature and between living beings, in which human relations are not considered exclusively. In this sense, to fight for the sustainability of all life, it is crucial to do so under the premise that we are *interdependent and eco-dependent* beings (Herrero, 2017a; Svampa, 2015).

We also see how the collective makes the stories and problems of the territory its own through action and participation, thus configuring itself as a *collective body* that develops a sense of belonging and collective identity (Ramugondo & Kronenberg, 2013; Palacios, 2015). We can recognize this in their self-designation as a “cell” —which is part of something larger—, and also in their way of inhabiting the territory and embodying the discomforts-well-beings that are experienced. Although they organize themselves in the face of a general discomfort sustained by the injustices and inequities

produced by the system, they also collectively transit between discomfort and subjective well-being (Ramugondo & Kronenberg, 2013; Palacios, 2015). Just as they face the repercussions of socio-environmental advocacy, the fact of belonging to the collective, establishing relationships of affection and mutual support, championing a larger struggle and collectively resisting what is imposed by neoliberalism, also generates pride, emotion, cohesion and well-being (Palacios, 2015). On the other hand, we visualize the collective identity in their positioning as socio-environmental defenders, who share common ideals, awareness, struggles and ways of life. This political identity orders their times, social relationships and tasks, in such a way that by defining themselves as socio-environmental defenders in this territory - and in these conditions - this is configured as a vital organizer that permeates all areas of their daily life, not only impacting on their health and well-being, but also structuring, enabling and giving meaning to their ways of life.

The different action strategies observed constitute practices that each person in the collective could not carry out individually, so we see how the collective is more than the sum of its participants and that it allows political actions that can only emerge collectively. Thus, this *collective body* inhabits the spaces and makes them its own, not in the sense of private property, but of inhabiting and being in those common spaces (Palacios, 2015). For all the above reasons, we consider that the socio-environmental advocacy supported by this core can be understood as a collective occupation (Ramugondo & Kronenberg, 2013; Palacios, 2015), which escapes the binary logics of human-non-human, nature-society, individual-collective, so that the “occupation”, to be understood in depth, must be studied from a non-anthropocentric perspective, which considers the planetary ecological limits (Méndez, 2011), as well as the material conditions of existence (Carcaño Valencia, 2008; Valderrama Núñez & Lara Riquelme, 2013), understanding the *human* as one more element within a complex ecosystem of ways of life. In this particular case, the study of the interactions that allow communities to move between collective discomfort and well-being through the organization, is what the discipline can address from the understanding of *collective occupations* (Ramugondo & Kronenberg, 2013; Palacios, 2015) that, in this case, produce bonds and affections, as well as risks and insecurities.

Although MODATIMA Santiago does not declare itself a decolonial ecofeminist nucleus, after sharing with the collective and carrying out our analysis, we see that its ideals and practices are supported by principles that can be understood from this position. They point out that it is impossible to separate our life from nature, as well as from the people who live with it, making it unfeasible to generate a fight for the advocacy for water and life in isolation, which genuinely responds to the recognition of the double condition of interdependence and ecodependence (Svampa, 2015). Likewise, they systematically highlighted the importance of recognizing and denouncing how political, social, historical, cultural and economic aspects define the health and well-being processes of populations, and that these processes are configured in a particular way in each territory (Liborio, 2013; Silva Norambuena, 2021). This view reflects the need to break the humanistic, individualistic and dichotomous perspective of health-illness (Casallas, 2017), linking the health experience with the struggles that the collective has sustained to overcome the discomfort caused by the processes of human and nature exploitation (Breilh, 2013). For this reason, both in the motivations for

belonging to the movement and the repercussions of being part of it, they declared that their well-being is determined by the relations of domination and oppression that are established in their daily scenarios (Breilh, 2013).

Finally, from a feminist reading we can understand that this common advocacy for water, life and well-being is a “[...] resistance against the total capture of our lives by capital” (Grandón Valenzuela, 2020, p. 4), understanding that their collective actions go beyond individual well-being, breaking with neoliberal, patriarchal, colonial and extractivist logic, despite the fact that most of them have not yet experienced the direct or immediate effects of the water crisis. Thus, through organization and collaboration, they build a movement of struggle that proposes decolonial logics of participation and habitation in Latin American territories, consolidating and anticipating social and political processes in pursuit of good living.

(In) Conclusions

By presenting the proposals from our decolonial ecofeminist position and a reading of *collective occupations*, we envision an opportunity to contribute to the processes of knowledge generation from critical perspectives and participatory methodologies in the science of occupation. In this way, we reinforce the political and situated positioning of occupational therapy through theoretical, methodological, practical and social disciplinary contributions linked to our research problem, which represents a social and ecological conflict that concerns human rights and nature.

We highlight the importance of contributing to the new ontological and epistemological understandings of the occupational and ecological problems presented above, which contributes to breaking with the traditional vision of occupation as an exclusively human and individual phenomenon. In light of this, we propose alternatives to the anthropocentric view that considers health as something exclusive to the human being, in order to strengthen the sociopolitical readings of the health and well-being/discomfort processes that go deeper beyond the health/illness binary. Our proposal aims to understand well-being and discomfort beyond an isolated health condition, which requires dialogue between perspectives of the social sciences and Latin American postulates of the discipline. In this way, participating in the construction of a complex approach to relational processes in health and interactions by and for collective well-being.

We also consider that this article contributes to the proposal of participatory and flexible methodologies that can be co-constructed with the protagonists, who embody the conflicts in particular and who, therefore, are experts by experience. From a feminist ethic, we aim for greater horizontality in the production of knowledge, which recognizes the agency of the protagonists and prioritizes care for the participating people and the organizational scenarios.

Although there are still no practical approaches to occupational therapy regarding water crisis, as a projection we propose the possibility of an involvement of the discipline in everyday spaces of political organizations and/or social movements for environmental causes. In this way, embarking on practices with communities that can position occupational therapy at the service of groups, not as an external device, but rather

belonging to and participating in the communities, which is precisely something that this ethnographic approach allowed us to explore.

Within the limitations of the research, we recognize the restrictions inherent to a feminist, local and situated proposal, which is not generalizable, since the conditions of time, space and form would not be the same. We also declare the need to make the theoretical framework more complex for a deeper reading of the problem. Although an approach from collective health and collective occupations manages to answer the research question, after this ethnographic approach we have understood that the reality experienced by socio-environmental defenders is more complex, so an approach from the theory of everyday life could have had an even greater analytical yield, as well as from intersectionality.

We hope that this research contributes to the generation of new discussions on the promotion of occupational therapy based on human rights and the care of nature, which includes and recognizes the human right to water. Likewise, in the development of a discipline that delves into contemporary processes characteristic of the neoliberal order, such as the privatization and commodification of natural common goods that mainly affect territories in the South. Finally, we consider that this research contributes to the processes of visibility and denunciation that MODATIMA Santiago has sustained with respect to the water crisis in Chile and its collective actions for the advocacy for water, allowing us to reflect on socio-environmental conflicts, the advocacy for nature and its repercussions on the well-being of the groups organized for this cause.

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Author's Contributions

Martina Barría-Madrid, Sylvia Flores-Fuentes, Sofia Garín-Varela and Fernanda Gutiérrez-Lagos conceived the research idea, carried out the bibliographic review, carried out the processes of linkage and participation with the main organization that constitutes the fieldwork and carried out the analysis together with the writing of the first version of the text. Débora Grandón-Valenzuela directed the research, also made theoretical contributions, wrote, revised and approved the final version of the text. The entire team of authors participated in the analysis of the information, and in its entirety approved the final version of the text.

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