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THE ROLE OF WORKERS' MOTIVATION AND COMMITMENT IN EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT: THE CASE OF A BRAZILIAN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION

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Abstract

This work investigates how the motivation and commitment of people at work influence the management of educational institutions. Additionally, the role of the manager in the context of school administration is also studied. To achieve the objectives of this work, the case study method was applied to a Brazilian public higher education institution (HEI).

The data were obtained through a questionnaire survey, which included three scales: (a) motivation for work, following Herzberg's conceptual framework; (b) organizational commitment, following Meyer and Allen's conceptual framework; and (c) management roles, following Mintzberg's conceptual framework. A sample of 61 workers was obtained, corresponding to 65% of the population of the higher education institution. Among all the respondents, 38 (62%) were women, 31 (51%) were under 40 years of age, 42 (69%) were married, a large majority, 59 (97%), had higher education qualifications, and 29 (48%) were professors.

Regarding motivation at work, the professionals of the HEI studied feel professionally fulfilled, consider their work challenging and interesting, have professional growth, have been promoted, and have a good interpersonal relationship with the management. However, they do not feel that their work gives them status, nor do they feel that their work is recognized by managers. The three items that generates the greatest professional satisfaction are professional achievement, professional recognition, and salary.

Regarding organizational commitment, HEI employees have a high affective commitment, moderate normative commitment, and low continuance commitment. As far as the roles of the manager are concerned, the roles most frequently played are those of figurehead, liaison, disseminator, spokesperson, entrepreneur, resource allocator, and negotiator.

The case study carried out allowed to identify areas for improving the management of educational organizations, particularly in the human resources management domain. Clues for future research are also identified.

Keywords: Higher education institutions, motivation, commitment, Mintzberg's Management Roles.

1 INTRODUCTION

The motivation and commitment of people to work are crucial for organisations to achieve higher levels of performance. This is true for most organisations, and for higher education institutions (HEI) as well. The success of such organisations and the satisfaction of their clients (students) is strongly influenced by the motivation and commitment of both professors and non-teaching staff.

Studies show that there is a positive relationship between employee motivation and increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of organisations [1] or the organizational performance [2, 3]. Even though this is the desired result, the literature shows that "although employees in an organization are believed to work to achieve the assigned goals, not all employees are motivated to put the maximum efforts to get their jobs done" [2]. Thus, deepening knowledge about the levels of motivation or what motivates (or not) workers, particularly in HEIs, is research worthy. "Most research and theory are built on the presumption that work motivation of individual employee will lead to greater performance at the aggregate level" [2]. This work will follow that assumption, and it will study the employee motivation from the individual-level perspective.

The literature also shows that organizational commitment is antecedent of job performance [4] and organizational citizenship behaviours [4, 5], these results being more relevant for affective commitment [6]. Job performance and organizational citizenship behaviour are, in turn, significant antecedents of

organizational performance and important variables that a manager should work with to improve it. The commitment of HEI employees is, then, worth of investigation.

All the antecedents of job performance and organizational performance could be handled by experienced managers. The manager's roles in the context of school administration are also studied. Mintzberg's conceptual framework of the manager's role will be considered [7].

This paper aims to investigate how the motivation and commitment of people at work influence the management of educational institutions. Additionally, the manager's role in the context of school administration is also studied. To achieve this purpose, the paper is organized into four sections. It starts with a very brief insight about the main concepts, followed by the methodological options made, it continues with the results, and ends with the conclusion.

2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

This section aims to review, with a very brief approach, the main theoretical concepts under study. The section starts with the motivation concept, then presents the organizational commitment construct, and finally, ends with the manager's role.

It is well recognized in the literature that "it is essential for an organization and its managers to understand what really motivates its employees if they intend to maximize organizational performance" [3]. There are several definitions and theories of motivation. Most of them are presented in the Lee and Raschke [3] article. In this article, the Motivation-Hygiene theory of Herzberg will be followed [8]. In the own words of Herzberg [8]:

Motivation-hygiene theory suggests that job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction are produced by different factors. What makes people satisfied at work are factors that relate to the content of their jobs – specifically, achievement, recognition for achievement, interesting work, increased responsibility, growth, and advancement. On the other hand, what makes people unhappy at work is not what they do but how well (or poorly) they are treated. These treatment factors (dissatisfiers) are related not to the content of work, but to the context of the job. [8]

The satisfier factors are also known as motivators because if they are well developed, they can increase work motivation.

In what concerns organizational commitment, the best-known model is due to Meyer and Allen [6] and it considers a three-component conceptualization of organizational commitment: affective attachment to the organization (affective commitment), perceived costs associated with leaving the organization (continuance commitment), and obligation to remain with the organization (normative commitment). There are several antecedents and consequences of organizational commitment. For instance, some of the main consequences of affective commitment are lower turnover, lower absenteeism, lower stress at work, higher levels of job performance, and organizational citizenship behaviours [4, 5, 6].

Higher levels of motivation and organizational commitment are desirable outcomes in any organization. For that, it is important that managers and leaders work with employees in a way that promotes an adequate organizational culture and good managerial practices. The study of Mintzberg's manager's roles is relevant in this process. For Mintzberg [7] any manager plays several roles that go far beyond the classic functions of planning, organising, directing, and controlling. Mintzberg [7] organized that roles in three groups: (a) interpersonal roles, embracing being figurehead, leader and promoting liaison; (b) informational roles, embracing being monitor, disseminator, and spokesperson; and (c) decisional roles, embracing being entrepreneur, disturbance handler, and resource allocator.

3 METHODOLOGY

In this section, the main methodological options are presented, namely the ones related to the sample and measures.

3.1 Case study

This work was carried out as a case study. The data were collected at a Brazilian HEI, the Federal Institute of Brasilia (FIB). FIB is an institution that has the legal nature of an autarky, belonging to the indirect administration of the Federal Government of Brazil, linked to the Ministry of Education, and its

main activity is to provide higher, basic and professional education. It has administrative, patrimonial, financial, didactic, pedagogical, and disciplinary autonomy. FIB is organised in ten *campi* and one rectorate. The study was performed in the Planaltina *campus*, which is composed of 112 permanent workers (56% professors and 44% non-teaching staff).

3.2 Sample

At the time of the study, from the 112 employees, 18 were on leave for various reasons (e.g., qualification, illness, maternity). The questionnaire was, then, administered to 94 HEI employees, of which, 61 participated in the study (65% response rate). The employees in the sample were 62% females (n:38), 51% had less than 40 years old (n:31), 69% were married (n:42), 97% had at least a degree (n:59), and 72% worked for the HEI for less than 10 years (n:46).

3.3 Measures

The data were obtained through a survey. The survey has three measures. The first is a motivation for the work scale following Herzberg's conceptual framework [8]. This scale was developed by Souza in their Master thesis work [9] and has 16 items, six for the motivators factor, and ten for the hygiene factor [8]. Respondents could respond on a Likert scale of 5 points (1: I totally disagree, 2: I disagree, 3: I neither agree nor disagree, 4: I agree, 5: I totally agree). One example of the item is: I feel professionally fulfilled with the work I do.

The second measure is the organizational commitment scale - following Meyer and Allen's conceptual framework [6] – developed by Rego et al. [10]. The scale has 11 items to assess the affective, normative, and continuance commitment dimensions. The scale was validated by Rego et al. [10] in the Portuguese and Brazilian context. As in Rego et al. [10], each individual was asked to mark, on a seven-point scale, the degree to which the affirmation applied to him (1: The affirmation does not apply to me at all; 7: The affirmation applies to me completely). One example of the item is: "I am proud to tell others that I am part of this organisation".

The third measure aims to assess the manager's roles following Mintzberg's conceptual framework [7]. This scale was developed by Souza in their Master thesis work [9] and has twenty items, two for each Mintzberg's manager role. Individuals were asked to indicate their agreement with the statements on a Likert scale of 5 points (1: I totally disagree, 2: I disagree, 3: I neither agree nor disagree, 4: I agree, 5: I totally agree). One example of the item is: "Your direct manager can give and receive feedback".

4 RESULTS

Following a descriptive approach, this section presents the main results, organized in three sub-sections: motivation, organizational commitment, and manager's roles.

4.1 Motivation

Most HEI employees score highly on Herzberg's motivational factors (Table 1). Most of the employees feel professionally fulfilled with the work they do (70%), find their work challenging and interesting (74%), feel responsible for the work they do (95%), have promotion opportunities (70%), and have professional growth (61%). Notwithstanding, only 46% considered themselves recognised for the work they do.

Hygienic factors show slightly lower levels of agreement than motivational factors. The results suggest that: they consider their interpersonal relationship with the leadership to be good (87%), they are satisfied with the remuneration (56%), they consider the interpersonal relationship with other servers to be good (80%), they consider the reconciliation between personal and professional life satisfactory (61%), they consider the management's interpersonal relationship with them to be good (87%), they feel secure in their public office (59%). However, only 43% agree that the organisation's policies and administration are satisfactory, 46% agree that the supervision received from the hierarchical superior is effective, 49% agree that the physical condition of the working environment is good, and 31% agree that their work gives them status.

Table 1. Motivation results.

		Disagreement (1+2)	Neutral (3)	Agreement (4+5)
Motivators factor				
1	I feel professionally fulfilled with the work I do	16%	14%	70%
2	I consider myself recognised for the work I do	34%	20%	46%
3	I find my work challenging and interesting	11%	15%	74%
4	I feel responsible for the work I do	3%	2%	95%
5	I have promotion in my professional career	20%	10%	70%
6	I have professional growth	25%	14%	61%
Hygiene factor				
7	The organisation's policies and administration are satisfactory	39%	18%	43%
8	I consider the supervision received from the hierarchical superior to be effective	30%	24%	46%
9	I consider my interpersonal relationship with the leadership to be good	10%	3%	87%
10	I consider the physical condition of the working environment to be good	25%	26%	49%
11	I am satisfied with my remuneration	36%	8%	56%
12	I consider the interpersonal relationship with other servers to be good	8%	12%	80%
13	I consider the reconciliation between personal and professional life satisfactory	25%	14%	61%
14	I consider the management's interpersonal relationship with me to be good	10%	3%	87%
15	I feel that my work gives me status	39%	30%	31%
16	I feel secure in my public office	15%	26%	59%

The results suggest that the HEI can introduce measures to improve recognition for the work the employee does, to develop the company's management policies, to enhance supervision, and to strengthen employee status levels.

4.2 Organizational commitment

Responses on organisational commitment (Table 2) show that HEI employees understudy show high levels of affective commitment (percentage of agreement in items 1, 2, and 3 ranging from 48% to 70%), moderate/low levels of normative commitment (percentage of disagreement in items 4, 5 and 6 ranging from 44% to 64%) and low levels of continuance commitment (percentage of disagreement in items 7 to 11 ranging from 65% to 75%).

Table 2. Organizational commitment results.

		Disagreement (1+2+3)	Neutral (4)	Agreement (5+6+7)
Affective commitment				
1	I am proud to tell others that I am part of this organisation	8%	23%	69%
2	I have a strong sympathetic attachment to this organisation	7%	23%	70%
3	I feel "part of the family" of my organisation	26%	26%	48%
Normative commitment				
4	Even if it would bring me advantages, I feel I should not leave my organisation now	44%	15%	41%
5	I would not leave my organisation now because I feel an obligation to the people who work here	54%	12%	34%
6	I feel that if I received an offer for a better job, it would not be right to leave my organisation	64%	15%	21%

Continuance commitment

7	I stay in this organisation because I feel I couldn't easily join another organisation	66%	13%	21%
8	I remain in this organisation because, if I left, I would have to make great personal sacrifices	65%	10%	25%
9	I feel I have few alternatives for employment if I leave this organisation	69%	11%	20%
10	I stay in this organisation because I feel that I have few opportunities in other organisations	75%	9%	16%
11	I will not leave this organisation because of the losses that would harm me	66%	8%	26%

Literature provides “support for the proposition that the three components of commitment have different implications for work-related behaviour” [11]. For instance, whereas the affective commitment correlated positively with the supervisor’s ratings of job performance, continuance commitment correlated negatively [11]. Then, the results obtained in this HEI are aligned with literature and were expected.

4.3 Manager’s roles

The last section of the paper studies the manager’s roles (Table 3) from the employees’ point of view. HEI employees agree that their direct managers play most of the management roles advocated by Mintzberg [7]. The roles most frequently played by managers are figurehead (82% agreement), negotiator (73% agreement), liaison (63% agreement), disseminator (61% agreement), resource allocator (57% agreement), entrepreneur (55% agreement), and spokesperson (54% agreement). The less frequently adopted roles are that of a monitor (38% agreement) and disturbance handler (40% agreement).

Table 3. Manager’s roles results.

	<i>Disagreement (1+2)</i>	<i>Neutral (3)</i>	<i>Agreement (4+5)</i>
Interpersonal roles			
1 Figurehead	9%	9%	82%
2 Leader	19%	32%	49%
3 Liaison	15%	22%	63%
Informational roles			
4 Monitor	33%	29%	38%
5 Disseminator	11%	28%	61%
6 Spokesperson	11%	35%	54%
Decisional Roles			
7 Entrepreneur	20%	25%	55%
8 Disturbance handler	13%	47%	40%
9 Resource allocator	14%	29%	57%
10 Negotiator	9%	18%	73%

Note: For each role, the percentage of disagreement/neutral/concordance were averaged (average of two items each role).

5 CONCLUSIONS

Regarding motivation at work, the professionals of the HEI feel professionally fulfilled, consider their work challenging and interesting, have professional growth and have been promoted, and have a good interpersonal relationship with the management. However, they do not feel that their work gives them status, nor do they feel that their work is recognized by managers. The three items that generate the greatest professional satisfaction are professional achievement, professional recognition, and salary.

Regarding organizational commitment, HEI employees have a high affective commitment, moderate normative commitment, and low continuance commitment. As far as the roles of the manager are concerned, the roles most frequently played are those of figurehead, liaison, disseminator, spokesperson, entrepreneur, resource allocator, and negotiator.

The management of educational organizations can use these results to improve management practices. For instance, the analysis of the motivation results reveals areas of improvement like to increase the perceived status that the work provided by each employee, or to improve the organizational policies and the administration of the HEI. The HEI has employees highly committed, at least affectively, and this result leads us to suggest that they are available to contribute to a more efficient and effective organisation. The institution has direct managers that have the skills and abilities to motivate and to increase the commitment of the employees, at least when the analysis takes into consideration the managers' role. We can highlight the roles of being a negotiator and to be able to promote the liaison between human resources.

Notwithstanding, this is just a descriptive study and no relationship between variables was tested. Future studies could test if higher levels of motivation result in higher levels of commitment (preferable the affective commitment), as well as if this relation is moderated by the manager's roles. Moreover, the results presented are specific of an HEI organization, and future studies should embrace more HEIs.

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