The Co-Existence of Presenteeism and Commitment Organizational: An Institute of Technical and Technological Education Perspective

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ABSTRACT

The present study aims to describe and analyze how presenteeism and organizational commitment of employees are outlined at the Federal Institute of Education, Science and Technology of Rio Grande do Norte (IFRN), a public organization, over the expansion of the institution. In the last five years, the number of *campi* went from two to sixteen, thus multiplying the number of employees. This empirical research is characterized by a descriptive and qualitative approach. The questionnaire WLQ-8 was used as a technique for data collection which addresses the presenteeism with the inclusion of two subjective questions addressing the issues Commitment and Presenteeism. The results indicate that employees of IFRN present a high level of commitment to their activities and also a low level of presenteeism. Given the limitations of the study, suggestions for future research are described.

Keywords: Presenteeism, Organizational Commitment, Human resources management, and Institution.

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the Federal Institute of Education, Science and Technology of Rio Grande do Norte has undergone many changes due to a new configuration obtained from Law No. 11.892, of 29/12/2008, as well as the insertion in the Expansion of Technological Education which has provided for the creation of new campuses in the state.

Given this current scenario, sixteen campuses, changes in the organizational structure are necessary to conform the activities of the institute to the new required demands, which include hiring new employees and upgrading of professional profiles of current ones. This new scenario has required a watchful view on the management team, organizational wellness, as well as the productivity of the employee.

Thus, this paper aims to identify the presence of presenteeism among IFRN employees - professors and administrative staff - phenomenon considered as a trap hidden within organizations. Still, the study aims to assess the level of organizational commitment of those employees, establishing possible relationships between the presence of presenteeism and the level of organizational commitment.

The research took place at the campus of São Gonçalo do Amarante, a town situated near Natal with a population of approximately 87,600 inhabitants, according to the IBGE[1] (2011). The campus inaugurated its activities enrolling its first students of technical courses in the first semester od 2011, and therefore, a framework of new employees possibly committed to the organization.

2. PRESENTEEISM: A HIDDEN TRAP

The phenomenon of presenteeism has motivated numerous studies recently. This trap has quietly installed itself in organizations and provoked concern about the decrease in worker productivity. Although not apparent, the employee's productivity at the workplace is directly affected by not being in the ideal conditions of health. This reality has long existed conceptually, defined by Paul Hemp, who in 2004 wrote an article on the matter in the journal Harvard Business Review. According to Hemp (2004, p.1), presenteeism is a condition of "being physically at work, but due to illness or other medical condition, being unable to produce in full." Statistics show presenteeism as a trap hidden inside organizations. According to Ferreira, Martinez, Sousa and Cunha (2010) the productivity of a worker can be reduced by 33% or more due to presenteeism. Still, according to the authors, it can be estimated that in the United States the annual productivity losses approach US$260 million, attributed to absenteeism and presenteeism. Ogata (2009) points out that among the ten most common health conditions in companies, it is concluded that presenteeism accounts for 18% to 60% of all healthcare costs.

It is pertinent to ask, therefore, what factors lead to the worker to develop this phenomenon. As Ogata (2009) says, the health problems that most affect productivity are depression, obesity, arthritis, back pain, neck pain and anxiety. The accelerated pace of work, uninterrupted pressure, constant complaints about leadership, goals to be achieved and the fear of losing their jobs are some aspects that contribute to the emergence of these health

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[1] "Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística" – Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics.

problems, causing in the workplace to reduce the work capacity of employees (CAPELO, 2012).

In this context, it is worth noticing that professionals who have Presenteeism signals are completely unaware of the fact that their condition affects their work. Typically, they feel discouraged, angry and tired but do not realize that they are sick. According to Fleck (2012), insisting on working in these conditions can exacerbate health problems and even generate mild depression. A survey conducted in the United States revealed that 60% of employees go to work, doomed to suffer with diverse health problems (OZMINKOWSKI *et al* apud FERREIRA, 2010). Of this total, 48% feel guilty about missing work, 20% fear a crackdown of managers and 18% fear possible consequences of absence from work (MCKEVITT, MORGAN, DUNDAS and HOLLAND, 1997).

Finally, it is important to emphasize that although the topic is relatively new, there are numerous instruments for measuring presenteeism. Among the most commonly used, according to Ferreira et al (210) are the Work Limitations Questionnaire (WLQ) that aims to diagnose the phenomenon of presenteeism in the organizational context and assess the impact of the phenomenon on the performance of workers. Besides, the Stanford Presenteeism Scale (SPS) measures the level of presenteeism in workers by two factors: the factor of completed work, which is the amount of work performed under the effects and causes of presenteeism; and the avoided distraction factor, that represents the amount of concentration mobilized to produce an effect when there is presenteeism.

3. ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT

The HR policies of companies that seek to establish communication with their employees can influence behavior and their involvement in the organizational environment and one way to achieve this is through the pursuit of commitment. According to Bastos (1997), "Commit means to feel connected to something and have a desire to remain in that course of action." This link established between the actors can be understood as a psychological bond that characterizes the connection of individuals to the organization, and that has implications for the decision to remain in it (MEYER AND ALLEN, 1991; ALLEN AND MEYER, 1996; MEYER, 1997).

Among the functions employed within the scope of an organization's commitment, Bastos, Brandão and Pine (1997) pinpoint: engagement, commitment, attachment, involvement, effort, identification and pride, among other aspects necessary for a satisfactory performance of organizational activities. The workers develop mechanisms that lead them to be participants in the organizational processes, leading them to try harder in the activities assigned to them and thus getting involved and creating attachment to both colleagues and the organization itself. The identity of this organization in some situations causes a shock to the personal identities of its employees, which can lead to a possible lack of commitment and then further problems like absenteeism, turnover and even presenteeism.

One can already say that it is a consensus that the commitment has multiple foci, as an organization, career, values, union and profession, and bases, such as affective, normative and instrumental (Medeiros et al., 2002). Related targets or foci of commitment, there are different approaches as to the nature or as to the reasons that lead the individual to commit. For Mowday, Steers and Porter, Meyer and Allen (1979, 1991), commitment assumes the role of a force or strong relationship that binds the individual to an organization can be conceptualized from three dimensions using a multidimensional approach comprising the affective commitment, Instrumental and normative.

The *affective commitment* refers to an emotional attachment, identification and involvement in the organization: the employee demonstrates a great satisfaction in staying in business,

strongly adapting to the organizational culture. This is the approach that for a long time dominated the literature of organizational commitment to work of Mowday, Steers and Porter (1982), which goes beyond an attitude of passive loyalty to the organization; it involves a search the welfare of the organization (Botelho and Paiva, 2011).

The *normative component of commitment* gained attention after the work of McGee and Ford (1987). This study found out three distinct factors for this type of commitment: the first consisted of affective indicators of the scale, the second consisted of indicators that demonstrated the few alternative employment for the employee; the third factor indicators showed the commitment from the personal sacrifice, related to the possibility of leaving of the organization. This commitment is the result of a sense of obligation, which moral pressure links the individual to their work organization. (Medeiros, 2003; Winer, 1982; Meyer and Allen, 1991).

Instrumental commitment is based on a need to stay. Research on the properties of instrumental commitment suggested that it consists of two components: (a) the sacrifices or perceived cost of leaving the organization and (b) the lack of alternatives, which may be faced by employees in the event of termination of employment (McGee and Ford , 1987). While (a) is based on ties to the organization, (b) reflects the commitment "by default" (Becker, 1960), because it involves a sense of being trapped within the organization. (Pannacio and Vandenberghe, 2012).

4. METHODOLOGY

The methodology adopted in this research is a descriptive and qualitative approach, developed at IFRN, São Gonçalo campus, with the employees of this Institution.

For this study we considered as subjects both administrative staff and teachers, with a total population of 34 employees, among them, 19 administrative staff and 15 faculty members, representing a sample of 85% of the active employees at the campus. Exclusion criterion was based on absence from work by professional license of any kind during the period established for data collection.

Data collection was conducted in April of the year 2012 during the week of *educational meeting*. This event marks the beginning of the school year and the presence of active employees is mandatory. At the time the employees attended a lecture on "Presenteeism and Organizational Commitment" that would allow employees to know the conceptual aspects of the issues addressed. Later, they would receive a questionnaire based on limitations in work (WLQ), which included two open questions.

The WLQ (Work Limitation Questionnaire) is an instrument translated, culturally adapted and validated for the Brazilian reality, used for evaluation of presenteeism and the interference of health problems on the performance at work.

5. ANALYSIS OF DATA

The questionnaire includes eight questions in Likert scale, aiming to better understand the behavior of individuals with regard to the issues experienced in everyday life and capable of presenteeism.

When the respondent was asked if he completed the requested workload, the result predominantly focused on the concordance (91% of respondents), while 6% opted for the option of neutrality and 3% disagreed. The second question refers to the habit of starting work as soon as the employee arrives at work. This item had a wider range of responses: 73% agreed (41% strongly agreed and 32% just agreed); 21% chose the option of neutrality and 6% disagree with the above. The third question brings out the repetition of movement at work by the respondent: 26.46% agree or strongly agree, 38.23% remained neutral and 35.33% disagreed or disagreed completely. The fourth issue

discusses the use of work equipment such as telephone and computer, taking 94.11% of respondents in agreement with the use of these objects and only 5.89% neutral issue. The concentration in the workplace by the employee is the core of the fifth point which reveals the concordance of 91.17% and 8.83% neutral. Solidarity mounts the idea of item six: "Do I help other colleagues to finish their jobs?" The answer to this question shows that 93.94% agree or strongly agree and 6.06% disagreed or were neutral to the topic. In item seven of the questionnaire the respondent had to say if he or she had been doing what was required of him or her at the institution. Those who agree totaled 97.06%, and 38.23% of this sum strongly agree; only 2.94% showed indifference to this issue. Finally, the eighth point of the research addresses whether the jog requested from the respondent matches his or her skills. In this perspective, 14.7% showed full agreement, 44.13% agree with the question, 26.47% understand that it does not apply and 14.7% disagree.

Given the results, homogeneity was found in the answers to questions 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, but the answers to questions 3 (three) and eight (8) catch the eye. There were outliers in relation to other questions regarding the aspects that shape presenteeism in organizations. Question three asked if there was repetition of movements during labor and over 62% were concordant or neutral. This scenario demonstrates the presence of presenteeism in the respondents. Question eight asked if the employee's responsibilities are adequate to what he or she could actually do. The results point out that 40% agreed with that, which points towards strong signs of presenteeism.

In order to deepen the discussions on the theme proposed in this study, the questionnaire included two open questions. One of them asked what motivated the respondent to have commitment to the institution. From the responses, we found a high level of commitment among employees from IFRN Campus São Gonçalo do Amarante, since in several quotes these professionals emphasize the welfare of working in the organization.

Some excerpts from the responses of respondents can demonstrate this fact, as it can be seen in the following statements: "The pleasure of teaching and the tool of my work can change the reality of a community", "A good organizational climate, presence of professional recognition, direct feedback from superiors "; "Financial stability and satisfaction in doing what I do", "The good concept that the institution has".

Based on this observation, there is in the research a strong presence of affective commitment between servers, who show ties with the institution and would like to carry out the work on behalf of education in a community. Allied to this, some respondents pointed out the fulfillment of having a good organizational climate within the institution, the result of good interpersonal relationships developed by the employees. Still, one can highlight the presence of the instrumental commitment where Meyer and Allen (1991) argue that the employee makes a balance between the costs and losses involved if indeed he or she comes to leave the organization. Several quotes observed financial stability provided by the Federal Public Service, which confirms the existence of this type of commitment among those surveyed.

The second open question asked employees about the moments in their work environment in which they felt signs of presenteeism. According to the responses, these signs were observed mainly in situations involving compulsory meetings considered inconsistent with the interest of the worker, idleness and mandatory completion of workload.

These factors listed appear to be chained, since there is a requirement to observe a weekly workload of twenty-six lessons of 45min. However, the average workload of the faculty members in this research is currently of sixteen 45-minute lessons, which makes the professors stay at work for long periods of time without any assignment whatsoever. This is very common for teachers who are not involved in research or extension projects and for teachers who have just arrived at school and still have no groups to teach. In various situations, intervals between classes add up to six hours, causing situations that bring out presenteeism.

In the context of the administrative staff, the complaint about idleness is related to meetings they must attend with a low percentage of issues of their interest, or that are considered irrelevant to their jobs. This also ends up culminating in moments of presenteeism in the organization, as can be seen in the following lines: "When I participate in certain activities / meetings only because I have to, due to the presence to be registered"; "At times when I have to complete my workload, even having done all my activities"; " When you are not charged me the actions that I can do", " When there is idle "

Thus, there appears to be a good level of commitment among servers Campus of São Gonçalo do Amarante, although evidence of presenteeism was found and therefore the need to evaluate possible situations of lost productivity proves relevant.

6. CONCLUSION

The results indicate that employees of IFRN have a high level of commitment to their activities. There is evidence of affective approach when workers expose how rewarding it is to work in a serious institution that provides adequate working conditions to its employee. When it comes to the importance of having stability, this element indicates that the instrumental approach of commitment.

In relation to presenteeism, the results show that there is a very low percentage in the answers of respondents referring to attitudes which demonstrate presenteeism. However, responses to questions three (3) and 8 (eight) show signs of this problem that afflicts organizations because of its invisible nature. One could say that it is not possible to assert that presenteeism is part of the routine of the staff of the institution. As to the answers to the open questions that were proposed, they suggest some points which are not presented from a quantitative approach, thus reinforcing that though presenteeism is still not a reality in the organization, it may develop and have destructive effects to the organizational climate.

Therefore, it is fair to say that the institution has a body of employees who are committed to their activities and especially with the organization, which makes presenteeism unconsciously avoided by the will of servers to build up a better institution. Most researched employees have been working at IFRN for less than two years, which can justify the effort expended on such commitment.

For future studies, a systemic study to all campuses of the institution is indicated, which shall observe the level of employee engagement as well as indications of presenteeism perceived in the organization. It is also important for future research to take this study further, to a deeper monitoring of the actors in this analysis.

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