

QUALITY OF WORK LIFE (QWL) AND ABSENTEEISM INDEX (AI) IN A SMALL BUSINESS

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Abstract — The competition between companies is generating a reduction in profitability ratios of the same, forcing the optimization of the production process, thus obtaining, greater efficiency in the allocation of factors of production involved. This research aims to correlate the rate of absenteeism with indicators of Quality of Work Life (QWL), through the results of a case study applied between employees of a brick small factory (pottery), located in central region of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil. For this, a method of qualitative research was used, which enables the researcher to evaluate in detail the practice of improving QWL, as quantitative in the identification of satisfaction and absenteeism rates. It was found that in the company is no correlation between absenteeism and QWL, being the category of “attendants” that had the highest rate of absenteeism and job dissatisfaction, on issues of QWL. In general, it can be concluded that most of the causes of absenteeism is related to the low level of employees satisfaction with their work, undermining personal relationships, principles of QWL, and hence production levels.

Keywords — Human resources, Absenteeism, Job motivation.

I. INTRODUCTION

The area Human resources (HRs) of the organizations can establish a framework for the organizational diagnosis considering (Yeung and Bermam, 1997):

- a) Determine what makes the success of the organization, i.e., what are the key organizational capabilities and which should be built to provide the satisfaction to stakeholders (customers, employees, shareholders or owners).
- b) Understand how HR can add value to the critical factors of success, emphasizing the organizational capabilities that can generate satisfaction at all levels of stakeholders.
- c) Design a proper measurement of the activities of HR, considering its operating activities, the performance of its corporate strategies.

The contribution of this diagnosis proposed by Yeung and Bermam (1997) lies in showing to the HR what are the points in which can add value and where there are gaps that need to be developed in terms of organizational capabilities; and these organizational capa-

bilities are the link between strategy and action.

Satisfied employees seem more likely to speak well of the organization and help others to exceed expectations in relation to their work. That corroborates to statement what satisfied and committed employees to the organization have lower rates of absenteeism and turnover (Pfeifer, 2010). Organizational culture (Robbins, 2005; Rashid *et al.*, 2004; Taormina, 2008; Naranjo-Valencia *et al.*, 2011; Yeo and Li, 2011) has an impact on employee performance and satisfaction. Organizational culture is a system of values of values shared by the members, which helps differentiate an organization from the others, i.e., it refers to how employees perceive the characteristics of the culture of the organization.

The organizational culture acts as a variable interference (Robbins, 2005), because the employees form a perception generally subjective of the organization based on objective factors. This perception becomes effectively the organization's culture or personality, because, the objective factors are perceived and assimilated over the years by its employees. Therefore, the more intense is the culture, the greater its impact on performance and satisfaction of employees.

In this context, Human Resource Management (HRM) (Strohmeier and Piazza, 2013; Martin-Rios, 2014) has become a powerful differential, and therefore, a strategy adopted by companies to face the current scenario characterized by competitiveness. The HRM (Jabbour *et al.*, 2011) involves planning, integration of all personnel and actions to reach it efficiently. The HRM (Osman *et al.*, 2011) refers to systems, policies, and practices that influence the behavior (attitudes and performance) of employees. HRM practices include determining the needs of human resources, recruitment, selection, training, reward, evaluation, serving also to labor relations, health and safety issues and justice. The effective implementation of HRM practices in organizations is a major source of competitive advantage, and it has been demonstrated that it contributes positively to the organization's performance (Khandekar and Sharma, 2005; Collins, 2007; Ordonez de Pablos and Lytras, 2008). Some problems can be faced by HRM, such as: lack of motivation, increased employee turnover, work-related illnesses, absenteeism, among many others; being absenteeism (Katz *et al.*, 1985) responsible for large

losses. Absenteeism causes injury, in the organization, in the form of work development, the rise in production costs and further delays the progress of production.

The traditional definition of absenteeism (absence) is not physically present at a given place and time where there is an expectation of the employee to be present (Løkke *et al.*, 2007). In a broader perspective (Rosenblatt and Shirom, 2005), absenteeism can be seen as part of the withdrawal syndrome, where employees react to undesirable working conditions, taking behaviors to distance himself from the work, as delays and intention to leave. Shore *et al.* (2006), Reuver and Van Woerkom (2010) support the thesis that affective commitment leads to a desire to remain within the organization. Employees with strong affective commitment will have to give their best, showing their skills in performing the work.

Løkke *et al.* (2007) suggest that the employee is absent a few days of work due to illness, the financial impact on the organization is not always related only to the activities performed by him. However, often reverberates throughout the organization, especially if he belongs to a group whose production has almost immediate implications on the timeline. Hayday (2008) warns that trying to deal with the causes of absence, first, it is necessary to look in order to provide insights into the problem and to illustrate the areas where policy can influence. The author cites some probable factors of absence of the employee in the organization: health and lifestyle, work-place, behavioral, stress and domestic.

Strategies for prevention absenteeism include: analysis of the current level of absenteeism in the organization; implementation of programs of health and safety at work; medical care for employees; assistance in return to work and even awards for attendance (Van Gestel and Nyberg, 2009; Waal *et al.*, 2011).

Analyzing the causes of absenteeism, for example transportation problems, inadequate policies, voluntary absences for personal reasons, low motivation to work, one realizes that there is a strong relationship with the QWL (Narehan *et al.*, 2014), while QWL may indicate the solutions to the problem of absenteeism. The absence of QWL can cause dissatisfaction and maladaptive behaviors, and on the contrary, a high QWL leads to better organizational environment, where motivated employees contribute to the continuity of the organization and their jobs. The QWL is a construct that concerns the welfare of employees and scope affects not only its satisfaction, but also their lives outside of work, such as family, leisure and social needs. When employee needs are not met, they are likely to experience the stress of professional life, which may have negative consequences on its performance, welfare and employment (Gallie, 2003, 2005). The QWL has two important features, namely: concern for the welfare of the worker and the pursuit of higher productivity for the organization. Chiavenato (2004) states that these dimensions of QWL are con-trary. Because, it addresses the claim of the employees as welfare and job satisfaction, and also,

the interest of organizations about their potential effects on productivity and quality.

Contrary to the view of Chiavenato (2004), Nespeca (2009) argues that these characteristics are complementary. Since the QWL comes to important behaviors for increased productivity as: motivation (Swift *et al.*, 2010), creativity (Uotila *et al.*, 2005; Sousa and Coelho, 2011), innovation (Cambra-Fierro *et al.*, 2011; Rennings, 2014) and changes (Stam and Stanton, 2010), which tends to be effective when the employee is satisfied with his job and feels good in his work environment and his health is not harmed by work conditions.

Today, the quality of life at work seeks to humanize labor relations in the organization, establishing greater narrowness in relation to productivity and especially with the satisfaction of the attendants in their work environment. It is still up, in living conditions of labor, associated with well-being, health and worker safety.

Satisfying the internal customer knows what are the expectations, needs and requirements, i.e., what are the factors involved in their QWL that, certainly, will affect their level of satisfaction, reflecting in productivity.

The work's characteristics (Benders and Van de Looij, 1994) can generally be divided into four categories: job content, work relationships (at micro level), work conditions and work environment. Dissatisfaction with one or more of these features will not directly lead to the dismissal of the employee. However, dissatisfaction with the characteristics of a particular work may (depending on their relative importance to the individual), reduce job satisfaction. Therefore, participation and employee involvement in favor of better work conditions can bring benefits to everyone involved in the organization.

In this context, the aimed of this paper is to identify the main factors that cause absenteeism as well as assess the degree of satisfaction of employees by means QWL in a brick factory (pottery).

II. METHODS

Data collection was performed by the HR department of the company in order to identify the absences of employees (sample of 27 employees) in the last 12 months, in order to calculate the rate of absenteeism. To achieve the proposed objectives, the stratification was characterized by types of absence and also by category of staff.

The research followed a questionnaire, which was adapted from the model originally proposed by Walton (1973) and applied, to employees. The model proposed by Walton consists of eight dimensions and/or criteria, which cover basic aspects of the work situations.

The model Walton prioritize and selected for data collection because its eight criteria cover with a good range of basics work situations and can be applied in many different types of work organization (Timossi, 2009). For the answers was used a scale of 1 to 7 points, which indicate the level of satisfaction for each dimension of the questionnaire. Quantitative procedures, basically, were used. From Table 1, it can be seen that the

Table 1 – Walton model of QWL

Factors of QWL	Dimensions
Fair and adequate compensation	Adequate salary to the employee; internal equity or compatibility; external equity and compatibility.
Safety and health conditions at work	Workload; physical (safe and healthy) environment.
Capacity utilization and development	Autonomy; meaning of task; task identity; skill variety; feedback.
Opportunities for continued growth and security	Possibility of career; professional growth; job security.
Social integration in the organization	Equal opportunities; interpersonal and group relationships, sense of community.
Constitutional guarantees	Respect to the laws and labor rights; personal privacy; freedom of speech; clear rules and routines of the organization.
Work and total life space	Balanced role of the work in the personal life.
Social relevance of life at work	Company image; social responsibility for products/services; social responsibility by employees.

Source: Adapted from Timossi (2009), Walton (1973)

Walton model is broad and includes diagnostic procedures of QWL, taking into account factors inside and outside the organization.

The following is the analyses related to data from the applied research in a small pottery, located in Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil. The factory, whose average monthly production is 820,000 bricks, has 27 employees in the following job categories: Production: 16 Attendants, 4 Burners, 2 Drivers, 2 Extruder Operators and 1 Backhoe Operator; and Administrative: 1 Director and 1 Administrative Assistant.

Initially, a collection of data was performed in the payroll and control of access point records, to identify the number of absences of each category of employees over a period of 12 months. The types of absences considered abnormal were identified, to calculate the rate of absenteeism, namely: unexcused absences, scheduled absences, medical leave, sickness, work accident, legal absences and suspension. Eq. (1) was used, calculating the Index Absenteeism (IA) for each category of employees and overall business.

$$IA_{ki} = \frac{N_{k,i}}{Dq_k - \sum_i N_{k,i}} \quad (1)$$

where k is each professional category; i is the type of unplanned absences; $N_{k,i}$ the amount of days of unplanned absences i committed by all employees of the category k ; D is the number of worked days in the period by the company; q , number of workers of category k ; and $\sum_i N_{k,i}$, the sum of all the days of unplanned absences committed by employees of the company.

III. RESULTS

Figure 1 shows the results obtained in the last 12 months of the General Index of Absenteeism in the company.

The rate of absenteeism can be compared to the percentage of loss of ability to work force, which in April exceeded 12%, due to an employee with health problems who was away for several days. It is noticed that

there is significant IA variation between the months of April and July, in September the index had a rise, and the company punished some employees with suspension of two days, because for having missed work without justification.

In order to seek improvements to the problems caused by absenteeism, reducing the IA, it is necessary to detail the absences by employee category. Figure 2 shows the composition of the IA by categories.

Analyzing the types of faults from the category “attendant”, can be seen that the highest percentage is not caused by disease or scheduled absences, but by “unexcused absences”, with 72% as shown in Fig. 3, which brings great inconvenience to the work organization, since the lack of an attendant may compromise the production line.

In order to relate the IA from that company with the indicators of QWL, Table 2 shows the data obtained from the survey, to assess the degree of employee satisfaction, separated by professional categories and overall company average.

Generally, employees are satisfied when it comes to indicators of QWL, but when analyzed in isolation realizes that they have dissatisfaction in the category of Attendants. This category is also has the most problems with absenteeism, so it is possible to identify a relationship between absenteeism and indicators of QWL, which means that absenteeism may have several of its causes attributed to the low level of employee satisfaction of this category. These points where there is great

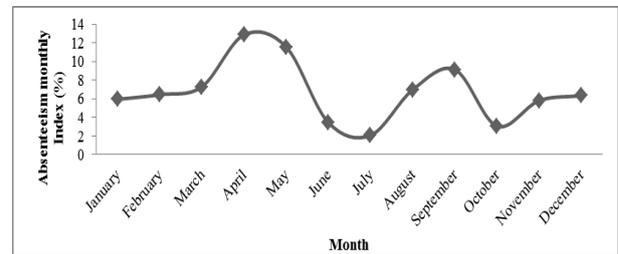


Fig. 1 – Absenteeism monthly Index. Source: Research data (2010)

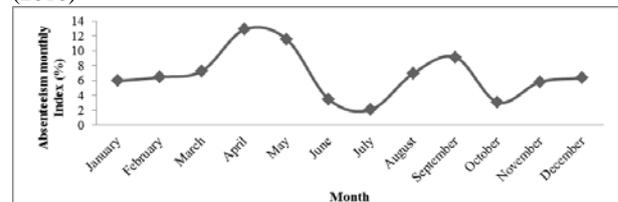


Fig. 2 – Annual IA per categories of workers. Source: Research data (2010)

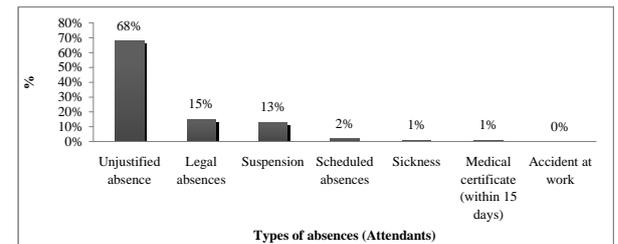


Fig. 3 – Types of absences from the attendants category. Source: Research data (2010)

Table 2 – Indicators of QWL

Factors	Attendants	Burners	Extruder Operators	Driver and Backhoe operator	ADM Sector	Average
Compensation and Working Conditions	3.17	5.35	5.96	6.31	4.28	5.01
Working Conditions	4.85	5.96	6.34	7.00	7.00	6.23
Use of Capabilities	6.00	6.48	6.27	7.00	5.39	6.23
Opportunities	1.95	3.59	5.29	6.58	4.13	4.31
Social Integration	5.12	5.32	6.05	7.00	5.42	5.78
Constitutionalism	6.34	6.49	6.42	6.00	6.00	6.25
Work and Family	2.44	3.22	3.86	5.77	6.10	4.28
Social Relevance	5.47	5.71	6.09	7.00	6.00	6.05
General Average by Category	4.42	5.27	5.79	5.68	5.54	5.52

Source: Research data (2010)

dissatisfaction, are not always related to internal factors of the company, but with the social and cultural level of the people. An important factor to be considered is the educational level of employees that in this company, in general, is low, however, considering only the attendants, 72% have not completed primary education.

Another external factor that should be considered is alcoholism, common among lower social classes. The company, based on historical data and knowledge about the daily lives of its employees, states that many of the absences occur because employees are unable to work, however, also are not sick. This occurs by excessive intake of alcohol, especially on weekends, and so on Mondays occur several unexcused absences. This may have relationships with the dissatisfaction of workers with recreational opportunities. Knowing that the influencing factors of absenteeism are internal and external, the company could adopt measures to contribute to the increased level of satisfaction and reduced absenteeism. Therefore, to improve the satisfaction with respect to compensation, the company could deploy a system of compensation for workers who not lacked without justification during the month, encouraging attendance.

III. CONCLUSIONS

Absenteeism is a serious problem that companies, especially industries, are facing today. This practice compromises the production line, slows down manufacturing, the sales, or service, and brings negative financial consequences, since this can result in delays in orders and cause cancellations of sales, and expenses of replacement and relocation of workers.

Generally, employees are satisfied when it comes to indicators of QWL, but when analyzed in isolation realizes that they have dissatisfaction in the category of Attendants. This category is also has the most problems with absenteeism, so it is possible to identify a relationship between absenteeism and indicators of QWL, which means that absenteeism may have several of its causes attributed to the low level of employee satisfaction of this category.

Therefore, as in this case study the main problem of absenteeism is related to unexcused absences, the main suggestions to fix it are the organization's investment in employee commitment and motivation. However, attention should be paid to verify that problems with health and safety, other issues must be addressed.

Therefore, the main problems identified in the study regarding absenteeism are to unjustified absences, how-

ever, when it comes to problems with health and safety at work, other points should be addressed.

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