

ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE AND EMPLOYEE REACTIONS

RAMONA RADUCAN, RADU RADUCAN

UNIVERSITY "1 DECEMBER 1918" ALBA IULIA, ramona.lungu@yahoo.com / UNIVERSITY
TIBISCUS TIMISORA, rraducan@yahoo.com

Abstract:

In modern society, occupational stress is one of the most important factors influencing health, quality of life and professional performance. The objective of the study is to analyze the influence of occupational stress generated by organizational changes on the feelings associated with the workplace. The following hypotheses have been advanced to achieve the objectives: 1. There is a statistically significant association between occupational stress arising from organisational changes and overall workplace satisfaction of Employees in SMEs. 2. There is a statistically significant association between occupational stress arising from organisational changes and organisational engagement of Employees in SMEs.

Statistically significant correlations between the above variables were obtained. The study is useful to the management structures in the organization under review, as it highlighted the influence of post-change stress on the feelings associated with the workplace in order to improve the negative effects. The study can also be used as an information resource for other SMEs in the country that want or need to implement changes and aim to reduce the negative emotional impact on employees from the first days, weeks or months.

Key words: occupational stress, job satisfaction, commitment.

INTRODUCTION

In a culture based on consumption and, by implication, on income, the profession and the workplace have become a defining element in the lives of each of us. The workplace matters not only for the financial aspects of life, but also for the self-image, for the public image, for the entire social life of the individual marked by role and social status. But even the best jobs have deadlines, regular evaluations and responsibilities that often form important sources of stress. If within reasonable limits occupational stress can be a motivating factor for professional performance, when it exceeds a certain intensity it can get out of control and affect the entire activity of the employee. To all the sources of stress mentioned above, another major one is added: organisational change.

1. TEORETICAL CONCEPTS

If the general concept of change refers to "a new state of affairs different from the old state of affairs" (French and Bell, 1987, apud Bacon, Ackers, Storey, 1996), organizational change can be more easily understood by comparing it with other types of changes. The designation of organisational change is very broad and does not specify the types of activities/ actions/ segments/ behaviours that are subject to change. Comparing operational and organizational change, we will notice that the first relates exclusively to individuals, with their roles and values, while the second covers a much wider field, namely all operational processes - those of customer service, production and logistics (Salminen, 2000, apud Pănimă, Pănișoara, 2005).

In addition, organisational change also covers changes in work processes, i.e. in work sets of duties performed in order to achieve a clear purpose in their subsystems as well. Thus, organizational change can mean "a state of transition between the current

state and a future state towards which the organization tends" (Cummings, 1985, p. 24). Although this definition is closer to the definition of change in general, a certain difference, albeit subtle, is visible. This definition originates from the conceptions of Lewin (1947), who formulated the concept of movement between two discrete and somewhat immutable "states", as organizational change, i.e. to be in the first state at moment I and in the second state at second moment II. The suggested movement is linear and static and, according to some authors (Kanter et al., 1990), does not fit the dynamic concept of organizational change because it greatly simplifies a very complex process but, precisely because of this, it offers a extremely direct opportunity to plan change actions.

Since 1940 to the present have published a lot of studies and articles advising managers how to overcome resistance to change in their own organization. We will present some of the most important theories, starting with that of Coch and French (Coch and French, 1948). Their theory begins in a famous study in literature, the first research that systematically addressed the issue of efficiency from the perspective of resistance to change. It is the study of Harwood Manufacturing Corporation, a textile products company (pajamas, in fact...), undertaken in 1948. The study authors considered, however, that **resistance to change** is a more complex force and that it is not just a matter of changing jobs, especially since even those who managed to return to the "normal" level of productivity exhibited behaviours of rejection towards management initiatives. Coch and French started from the assumption that within the "disruptive" resistance, dynamics and group norms are as important as individual characteristics. This study was among the first to draw attention to group methods to overcome resistance to change and had a great influence in persuading managers to use methods based on group participation in their attempts to introduce changes in organizations.

In general, performance measurement models can be said to be used to define and construct different types of measurements needed to highlight an organization's performance. In this respect, one can give the example of DuPont, which at the beginning of the 20th century used to highlight the "financial ration pyramid" model, which linked a wide range of financial indicators with aspects of income or investment. This model was a hierarchical, explicit measurement structure that included measurements at different organizational levels (Neely, 2003, source: www.apubb.ro/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/Dezvoltare, accessed on 22.04.2017).

Other framework models consider that organisational structures have a major influence within performance measurement systems, not only in terms of interactive terms between the system and the structure, but also in terms of ensuring a resource supply capacity or planning operation (Rouse & Putterill, 2003, source: www.apubb.ro/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/Dezvoltare, accessed on 22.04.2017). Below we will analyze the main framework models that underlie performance measurement systems that lend themselves, in our opinion, to be used by organizations: 1) Fitzgerald's Model, 2) Keegan's Model, 3) Lynch and Cross's Model.

A. Fitzgerald's model

The goal of Fitzgerald's model is to propose that each manager or manager of a service organization develop his own set of performance metrics over six dimensions to continuously monitor his or her own competitive strategy. In his view, this set of performance measurements are always in interaction and influenced by the competitive environment, the competitive strategy and the type of service provided, three contingent variables determining "why", "what" and "how" performance should be measured (Fitzgerald et al., 1991, source: www.apubb.ro/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/Dezvoltare, accessed on 22.04.2017).

In explaining the model, Fitzgerald starts from the role of the management information system, which in his opinion should help managers to provide the necessary information to plan, organize and make the decision. This type of system should also be a support, both for corporate objectives and a support for strategic control or operational control. In this idea, performance measurement, based on the management information system, should be centered around the control, i.e. performance measurement being part of a reverse control loop (feedback loop) designed to stimulate the most appropriate actions of the organization .

B. Keegan's performance measurement model

In the construction of its performance measurement model, Keegan D.P. starts from the fact that performance measurement in an organization must be integrated vertically and horizontally with the functions of internal processes as well as with aspects related to the organization's activities. In his view, performance measurement should provide and secure the link between the organisation's activities and its strategic plans. In this respect, D.P. Keegan and his collective proposed a model in which the measurement of performance extends throughout the entire structure of the organization, i.e. to hierarchical levels, each level being assigned certain performance measurements (Keegan D.P., Eiler R. G., Charles R., 1991, source: www.apubb.ro/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/Dezvoltare, accessed on 22.04.2017).

C. Lynch and Cross's Model

The model developed by Lynch and Cross is a structural model for a new information network that is considered to be the basis of the SMART control system. The model is presented in the form of a pyramid, the SMART pyramid, and is based on combining quality management with the internal processes and operations of the organization. According to the two specialists, the model is based on two concepts, namely the concept of objectives and the concept of measurement. The central idea of this model was to convert strategic objectives through top-down detail (based on customer priorities) while measurements start from the bottom up along the four pyramid levels (McNair, Lynch, Cross, 1990, source: www.apubb.ro/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/Dezvoltare, accessed on 22.04.2017). Therefore, the pyramid provides, as a model, a two-way structure of a communication system necessary to establish a strategic vision in the organization.

Based on previous research, we consider it necessary to develop theoretically based occupational stress management procedures based on the analysis of the needs of the organization and employees, procedures to be re-evaluated and reviewed regularly. We believe that the implementation of such procedures at the organizational level can lead to a decrease in occupational stress and therefore a decrease in the depressive reaction among employees.

The ultimate goal of organizational change is success, i.e. a better match between the organization and the environment in which it evolves, as well as a more efficient and effective way of working. The success of a change can also be defined as the degree to which that change meets the following criteria (Salminen, 2000):

- a. Fulfills the purpose for which it was implemented;
- b. It shall not exceed the deadline or the budget fixed to it;
- c. Leads to positive economic and operational results within a reasonable period of time, which exceed the costs of its implementation;
- d. It is perceived as a success by both internal and external members of the organization.

We can therefore conclude that the success of organizational change depends both on the quality of the solution found and on the effectiveness of its implementation, which can have three consequences:

- a. Efficient implementation, use of innovation or change (interchangeable in the given context) improves the performance of the organization;

- b. Efficient implementation, but the performance of the organization is not affected in any way;
- c. Implementation is not successful (Klein and Sorra, 1996, source: www.apubb.ro/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/Dezvoltare)).

Many aspects of the company's life, such as: changes in the managerial hierarchy, restructuring scariness or mere rumors, add to the usual stress related to the workplace, amplifying it. Prolonged stress in the workplace can affect in the long term, first of all, the health of employees, which leads to decreased expected performance and, therefore, economic losses. Stress occurs when a person perceives changes in the environment as a threat or as a situation for which he does not have the right coping/adaptation/response mechanisms. Work-related stress occurs when job demands exceed employees' ability to cope with or keep them under control. Stress in work not only generates significant disruptions in productivity, creativity and competitiveness, but is an important cause of medical leave lasting at least two weeks. This is due to the consequences generated by stress: conditions like depression, anxiety, nervousness, fatigue and psychosomatic disorders. Currently, there are numerous studies demonstrating the harmful effect of stress and its involvement in cardiovascular, endocrine, gastrointestinal and immune diseases. Other studies (Karasek & Theorell, 1990) show that stress inhibits learning/development and aggravates musculoskeletal problems (Houtman et al., 1996).

Cartwright and Cooper (2002, source: <http://cluj2010.files.wordpress.com/... a-suciu-ro>, accessed on 25.04.2017) redefine the integrative model of stress, considering that it includes:

- stressors (relationships in the workplace, the balance between work and personal life, overload, job security, control, resources and communication, payments and benefits, aspects of the workplace),
- organizational commitment (perception of the individual's commitment to the organization and the organization to the individual) and
- physical health and psychological well-being, as well as
- self-assessment of labour productivity, absenteeism, lifestyle, etc.

The model provides a dynamic perspective on its elements, **stress** being considered a consequence of mismatches between the individual and the organizational environment in which he works. **Occupational stress** is also an effect of this mismatch, and the consequences are reflected in his physical health and psychological well-being. Stress is seen from the perspective of the authors of this model (Cartwright & Cooper, 2002, source: <http://cluj2010.files.wordpress.com/... a-suciu-ro>, accessed on 25.04.2017), as a reaction both physical and emotional, with concrete negative consequences, which occurs when the demands of the working environment are not adequate with the knowledge, capacities, resources and needs of the individual.

A central place within **the holistic process model of stress** is the concept of **evaluation**. Thus, an event or condition can be labeled as stressful, depending on the subjective perception, influenced by individual differences, environmental factors, coping mechanisms available to the person. In turn, coping mechanisms respond differently to the demands to which the individual is subjected and influence the consequences of the action of sources of stress on physical health and psychological well-being, work productivity, absenteeism, etc.

Individuals with **negative affectivity** are most often involved in activities with a very low level of work autonomy, scarce definition of the tasks, requiring few skills, have little significance and almost non-existent feedback from the manager (Spector, Fox & Van Katwyk, 1999). This would mean that **the affective mood** even influences the choice of type of job or profession (Lazarus, 2006, source: <http://www.unibuc.ro/... UTAT Mariana Ispas Cotiga>, accessed on 25.04.2017). Also, positive affective

disposition determines more accurate decision-making, better interpersonal relationships and higher managerial potential (Staw & Bersade, 1993, cit. in Lazarus, 2006, source: <http://www.unibuc.ro/...> UTAT Mariana Ispas Cotiga, accessed on 25.04.2017).

On the other hand, researchers were also interested in other factors that influence employee productivity, corporate profitability, and customer loyalty. Thus, they concluded that there is another significant component, of an emotional nature, which they referred to as 'organisational commitment'. Analyzing it, the researchers found that a motivated and engaged employee is more likely to work at an optimal level and achieve the desired performance than one who is not passionate or even demotivated. So far, things seem very simple, logical, having common sense. And yet, it's not like that! Experts in the field have failed to find a unanimously accepted definition of commitment. Thus, different factors of influence and other types of implications have resulted. A "combined" definition would sound like this: employee engagement is an intense emotional connection, which an individual feels within the organization, thus being influenced to make an increased effort to perform his professional tasks.

Even on a superficial analysis of employees, it can be observed that their relationship with work is diverse. If for some work represents the very meaning of life, for others work is a necessary evil, one of the legal means at hand to obtain the necessities of living. Experts call the phenomenon described above as "employment commitment", which, in an approximate translation, means "commitment to a paid job" (in short, "commitment to work"). In a somewhat more academic definition, "commitment to work" refers to the extent to which a person generally wants to have a paid job, whether or not he needs it (Esser, 2005, p.63) and, we add, whether or not he needs that money for survival.

Once the phenomenon was discovered, the researchers were also interested in the factors that influence it. Thus, they found that the age of employees correlates with organizational commitment. Young employees at the beginning of their careers, usually in lower positions, should show a lower commitment to work. Moreover, according to Inglehart (1997), the orientation of young people is rather a post-materialistic one, which should decrease their level of commitment to work. Older employees in the last period of activity should also have a lower commitment as a result of fatigue accumulated at work. Therefore, graphically speaking, the expected relationship between age and commitment represents the shape of the bell (Svallfors, 2001).

By overcoming the traditional model of society, but also for purely economic reasons, women have gradually become a significant percentage of all employees. Gender is generally considered to play a central role in structuring commitment to work and family. Given the greater orientation of women towards family life compared to men, their commitment to work would be expected to be lower. The assumption was subsequently disproved, with studies showing only small differences between genders.

For these reasons, but also because it dramatically influences adaptive functioning (social functions, health status and quality of life), the level of satisfaction and morale of individuals, stress has become an important field of study in modern society. Measuring the perceived stress level and analysing correlations with different personal characteristics have become important not only for purely scientific purposes, but especially for the various intervention programmes in the fields of public, medical and social health.

2. METHODOLOGY

The general objective pursued in this study is to analyse the influence of occupational stress generated by organisational changes on the feelings associated with

the workplace. The following assumptions have been advanced to achieve the objectives:

1. There is a statistically significant association between occupational stress arising from organisational changes and overall workplace satisfaction of Employees in SMEs.
2. There is a statistically significant association between occupational stress arising from organisational changes and organisational engagement of Employees in SMEs.

Population and Sample

The sample consisting of the 32 subjects employed by a car dealership in Timisoara in April 2018, four weeks after the introduction of organizational changes: replacement of the general manager, change of point of work and reorganization of the car sales and repair activity. We note that there are 12 subjects of female and 20 male sex, aged 20 to 59, with an average age of 34.2 years.

Research tools

To measure the independent variable occupational stress we turned to the psychometric technique Occupational Stress Questionnaire, to measure the dependent variable of satisfaction in the workplace we used the psychometric technique Questionnaire Global Satisfaction in the workplace, and for measuring the variable dependent organizational commitment we used the psychometric technique Questionnaire Organizational Commitment.

The "Occupational Stress" questionnaire comprises 32 statements to which subjects are invited to respond to the extent to which they are suited. These answers are: never, sometimes, often, always. The stress level is measured by rating for each statement. They are punctuated as follows: 1 point - for the answer, never, 2 points - for the answer, sometimes ", 3 points - for the answer, often ", 4 points - for the answer, always "

The "Global Workplace Satisfaction" questionnaire contains a set of 17 questions that subjects are invited to answer after the following instruction: "The purpose of this questionnaire is to assess how satisfied you are with different aspects of your work. Please circle a single number on each scale for each question listed below. Write down the number that best reflects your opinion."

The questionnaire investigates the following organizational aspects: salary, other monetary benefits, collateral benefits – other forms of benefits, supervision – control, recognition – appreciation, nature of work, actual workload, colleagues, resources, training, professional development, promotion, job security, physical working conditions, rules and procedures, work in general, organization in general.

The points for each question are added together and the result is interpreted according to the following assessment: 0 – 17 points = very low overall satisfaction; 18 – 34 points = low overall satisfaction; 35 – 51 points = average overall satisfaction; 52 – 68 points = high overall satisfaction; 69 – 85 points = very high overall satisfaction.

The "Organizational Commitment" questionnaire is given by Peter Peak after Meyer, J.P., & Allen N.J., (1997) *Commitment in the workplace*. The questionnaire contains 21 items divided into 3 factors, and the subject's answers are evaluated on a scale of 1 to 7, where: 1 represents "strong disagreement" and 7 represents "strong agreement". The factors investigated by this questionnaire are the following: affective commitment, continuity commitment and regulatory commitment.

The organizational commitment refers to the level of attachment and loyalty that the employee feels to the organization, denoting the psychological connection between the employee and his organization that makes the intention to leave the organization less

likely (Meyer & Allen, 1991). The more research in the field of organizational commitment has increased in number and quality and matured, the more clear it has become that this concept has a multidimensional nature (Taejo, 2003). Meyer and Allen (1991, source: www.researchgate.net/publication/222453827, accessed on 16.06.2014) identified three different types of organizational commitment:

- ✓ Affective engagement is the commitment based on identifying and involving the person within the organization. People with a high emotional commitment to an organization stay in that organization because they want to.
- ✓ Continuity commitment is the commitment based on the costs involved in leaving the organization. People who have a high commitment to continuity stay in the organization because they have to.
- ✓ Normative commitment is a commitment based on an ideology or a sense of obligation to the organization. People with a high regulatory commitment remain in an organization because they think they ought to.

Results

HO 1. There is a statistically significant association between occupational stress generated by organisational changes and overall workplace satisfaction of SME employees.



Figure 1. Presentation of absolute and relative frequencies of occupational stress levels

In Figure 1 we see that the majority of employees, 53%, perceive too high an occupational stress level.

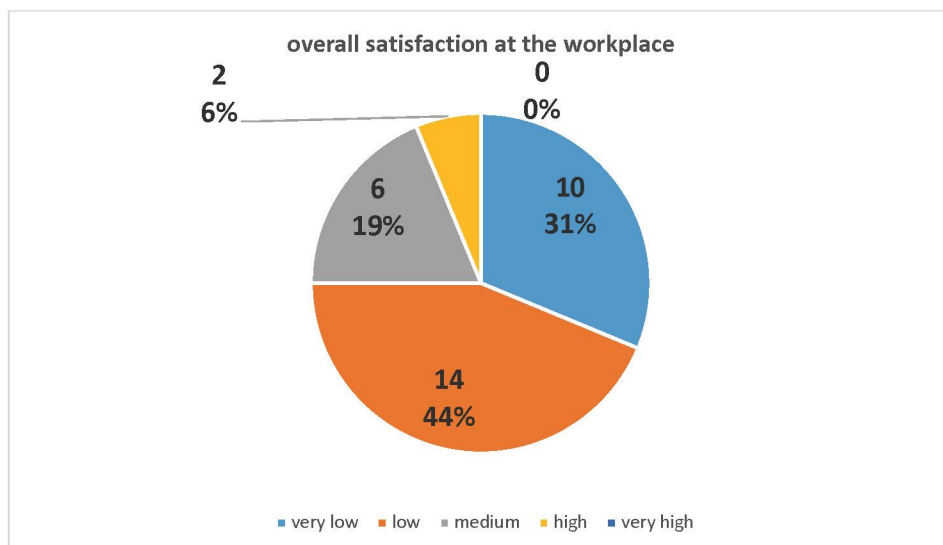


Figure 2. Presentation of absolute and relative frequencies of overall satisfaction levels at work.

In Figure 2 we note that the majority of employees, 44%, have a low level of overall satisfaction in the workplace, and 31% of employees have a very low level.

Table 1. Presentation of the correlation coefficient r Bravais-Pearson for the association between occupational stress and job satisfaction

Variables		Satisfaction at work
Occupational stress	r	- 0,625
	p	0,000
	N	32

Following the verification of the hypothesis using the statistical process, the correlation coefficient r Bravais-Pearson, a negative correlation between occupational stress and overall satisfaction at work $r = - 0,614$ was obtained at a threshold of statistical significance $p \leq 0.001$. So there is a statistically significant negative association between occupational stress generated by organizational changes and overall job satisfaction. Hypothesis 1 is confirmed.

HO 2. There is a statistically significant association between occupational stress arising from organisational changes and organisational engagement of Employees in SMEs.

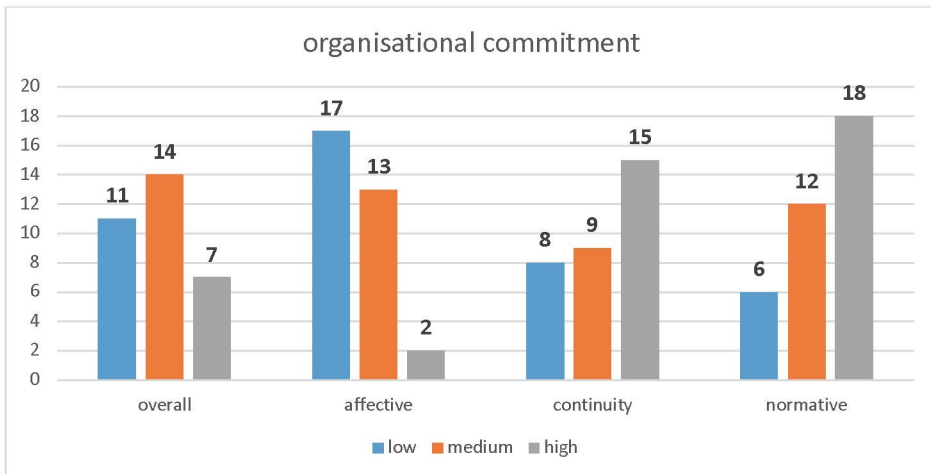


Figure 3. Presentation of absolute and relative frequencies of organisational engagement levels

Table 4. Presentation of the correlation coefficient r Bravais-Pearson for the association between occupational stress and organizational engagement

Variable		Global commitment	Affective commitment	Continuity commitment	Regulatory commitment
Occupational stress	r	-0,252	-0,477	0,271	0,591
	p	0,061	0,004	0,063	0,000
	N	32	32	32	32

Following the verification of the hypothesis using the parametric statistical process, the correlation coefficient r Bravais-Pearson, statistically significant correlations were obtained as follows:

- Negative correlation between occupational stress and affective engagement, $r = -0.477$, at a significance threshold $p \leq 0.001$;
- Positive correlation between occupational stress and normative engagement, $r = 0.591$, at a significance threshold $p \leq 0.001$.

So, there is a statistically significant negative association between occupational stress generated by organizational changes and affective engagement, i.e. a statistically significant positive association between occupational stress following changes organisational framework and regulatory commitment.

Hypothesis 2 is partially confirmed.

3. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The results show that there is a very statistically significant negative association between occupational stress following organizational change and overall job satisfaction.

Richard Lazarus (1966) highlighted the relationship between stress and emotion, against the background of the process of cognitive evaluation of environmental transactions and considers stress as an integrated process in emotional manifestations. More recently, Cartwright & Cooper (2002) considers the occupational stress as a consequence of mismatch between the individual and the organizational environment, but at the same time an effect of this mismatch. Cartwright & Cooper (2002) believes that occupational stress has consequences in physical health and psychological well-being. The same authors highlight the duality of occupational stress when they consider it a physical and emotional reaction, with concrete negative consequences, which occurs when the demands of the working environment are not adequate with the knowledge, capacities, resources and needs of the individual. Both Lazarus and Cartwright & Cooper highlight the emotional side of stress, including occupational stress.

On the other satisfaction has been linked to the individual's perception of work that it leads to the fulfilment of his own stable, relatively identifiable needs, including needs and personality, and work also has a set of characteristics important to the individual's needs. When the characteristics of the job are comparable to that of the person one can assume that the person is satisfied. Thus, it can be observed that occupational stress and job satisfaction have several elements in common: the needs of the individual, the demands of the work environment, the subjective (personal) perception and evaluation of work and the positive or negative emotional reaction. I consider that this explains the very close association between the two variables.

Other results show that there is a statistically significant negative association between occupational stress generated by organizational changes and affective engagement.

As shown by the experts, employee engagement is represented by an increased emotional connection, which a person feels within the organization, thus being influenced to make an increased effort to carry out his or her tasks. Professional. Johns (1996) believes that emotional engagement is generated by an interesting, rewarding work, clarity of role and satisfying one's expectations.

If a central place within the holistic procedural model of organizational stress is the concept of evaluation, in which an event or condition is labeled as stressful, then the high level of occupational stress of the subjects means that the elements that determine this labelling (subjective perception, environmental factors, coping mechanisms of the person) also provoke a negative emotional reaction. We believe that organizational

commitment is, by definition, characterized by positive emotionality, so negative emotions generated by stress in the workplace significantly reduce positive emotions and emotional connection with the general framework of Organization. In addition, as we saw earlier, high occupational stress is associated with reduced work satisfaction and thus leads to a reduction in the intensity of affective engagement.

The results indicate a statistically significant positive association between occupational stress generated by organizational changes and regulatory engagement.

The normative commitment is reinforced by the personal benefits that determine a sense of obligation towards the organization and a strong identification with the organization's products or services.

Accepting Cartwright & Cooper's ideas (2002) that occupational stress is a consequence of the mismatch between the individual and the organizational environment, then increasing the normative commitment under the conditions of increasing the occupational stress generated by organizational changes can be the reflection of the hopes of employees that this change will bring them a personal benefit.

On the other hand, if this increased level of occupational stress is the consequence of resistance to change of employees, then increasing the regulatory commitment means increasing identification with the organization's products or services. In other words, employees remain in the company because they identify the brand of the car brand, a world-renowned brand, even if, or especially, if changes occur in the company that affect them emotionally negatively. The ability to work within the brand becomes an even stronger factor in employee loyalty.

The study is useful to the management structures in the organization under review, as it highlighted the influence of post-change stress on the feelings associated with the workplace in order to improve the negative effects. The study can also be used as an information resource for other SMEs in the country that want or need to implement changes and aim to reduce the negative emotional impact on employees from the first days, weeks or months.

The Limits of the Work

An important limitation of this study is that the research was not conceived as an experiment. We believe that the experimental research method would have been much more faithful to the capture of the relationships between variables than the quasi-experimental method, which we used.

A number of influences of parasitic variables may also occur, such as: ages, gender, level of training, subjects' residence environment, organisational climate, motivation for work of subjects, hierarchical position (post execution or management). All this can influence occupational stress, job satisfaction or organizational engagement.

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