

Work engagement, innovation and the context of work: a study in public universities

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In a changing environment, organizations can be competitive investing in innovation and on the engagement of their employees, which became an interesting subject to organizational psychologist researchers.

This study aims to understand how employees' perception about their contractual stability influence their behaviors, in two public universities: one Portuguese and one Brazilian.

The results presented are part of a larger project which intends to analyze the relations between work engagement, innovative behavior and contextual and social-demographic variables, in the context of public employment.

The total sample is composed of 376 University employees (faculty members and staff), with different ages, male and female, with high to superior level of education. Two hundred and forty five employees of the sample work at the Brazilian university.

The data presented in this study were collected, with an open question inserted on an online questionnaire, which was available from December 2018 to March 2019.

Data were analyzed with template analysis (King, 2018). The results show that most of the employees recognize the impact of contractual stability on their individual performance. On both Universities, job security is pointed as main consequence of contractual stability, which enable employees to develop creativity and innovation on their work routine.

Employees, who considered themselves as innovative, emphasizes the implementation of ideas, the risk and autonomy as the behaviors they experience in their work environment. Besides their own individual performance, the employees refer the stability impacts their work engagement, work satisfaction and the relation with their employer_ the university.

Dedication was the dimension of Work engagement (Schaufeli et al., 2002) more referred by the employees of both universities. Vigor was also mentioned, but only by the Brazilian University employees.

From the data analysis, and as a consequence of contractual stability, employees pointed out achievement, recognition of the work well done, responsibility, promotion, which can be classified as satisfaction factors (Herzberg, 2005). They too referred to salary, and interpersonal relationship with supervisors and peers, i.e, Herzbergs' hygiene factors. In the Brazilian University, it also was pointed out the threat of unemployment, the supervision and the organizations' internal policies, while in the Portuguese university, the nature of work and work conditions were referred as hygiene factors. Accommodation, in the sense of a responsive answer to routine, was also reported as a result of contractual stability.

The organizational commitment experienced by the employees is characterized mainly by the emphasis on the affective component, although some responses indicate the presence of calculative and normative facets.

There is a group of employees who doesn't recognize the impact of contractual stability on their behaviors. Although, they refer and value the same factors: work engagement, satisfaction and commitment.

Comparing both groups, only those who recognize and value the contractual stability, referred creativity and innovation (Amabile, 1997) as an impact on their behaviors. These preliminary results point to the importance of contractual stability to the emergence of creativity and innovation and deserve deeper analysis.

Key-words

work engagement, innovative behavior, work context, stability, education, public university