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Full Length Research Paper

Discretionary Work Effort and Organizational Citizenship Behavior: Investigating Brazilian Teachers' and Public Officials' Behavior

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The purpose of this paper is to investigate the various manifestations of discretionary work effort, an organizational behavior at the micro level, understood as the level of effort made by the individual, which exceeds what is minimally required by the organization, not paid by formal rewards systems, free initiative of the individual; as well as their connections with the organizational citizenship behavior and intra role and extra role behavior. We used a qualitative approach based on case studies. Ten interviews were conducted with three officials and seven university professors from the city of Salvador, Brazil, and the metropolitan area between October and December 2014. From the reports of respondents it was possible to identify the existence of a number of discretionary effort practices at work, most of them often performed unconsciously, both in intra role and extra role dimensions. The results reveal the existence of some behaviors in the organizational framework that take on the characteristics of discretionary work effort, as well as the need to broaden the understanding of such behaviors by organizations, workers and researchers.

Keywords: Discretionary work effort. Organizational behavior. Organizational citizenship behavior.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to investigate behaviors performed by individuals in their working environments that are characterized as discretionary work effort (DWE). We used a qualitative approach, and as a methodological strategy, case studies. To illustrate the DWE, consider the case of an organization that is a working group to propose solutions to any issue related to their internal

processes. Some people are invited to join this group without additional compensation and without exempting themselves from regular activities. There is no punishment for those who do not accept taking part of the group. Some people accept taking part of the group, others do not. Those people who accept to integrate the working group are actually presenting one of several

behaviors that can be characterized as DWE, a typical behavior of the organizational context, however, not yet properly investigated, especially in Latin America.

In an environment where technology is becoming more accessible at a lower cost allowing the invasion of privacy of the individual by the corporate world, the competitive advantage of organizations can be on people and their willingness to employ an extra effort at work. Parrey (2014) says there is enough research to support the phenomenon that people are the most important phenomenon of an organization, therefore, it is interest of the Administration to understand this behavior, which should be understood as an organizational behavior at the micro level. As Aguiar (2005) highlights, organizations are formed by people, so the behavior of people in their working environment directly affects the organization.

It is not rare for the individual to get involved, even unconsciously, in work-related activities when in familiar surroundings, home, or even in leisure time or vacation. Accessing corporate e-mail from the smart phone on a weekend, taking a phone call from the company at lunch time, accessing the internet to solve a work issue outside work time, engaging in activities that go beyond the formal role the individual are behaviors that take on the characteristics of a DWE.

In this scenario arises the relevance of the subject: investigate behaviors that are characterized as a discretionary work effort. As discussed below, the subject still seems incipient to researchers, employees and organizations. However, it is a phenomenon that is present, and therefore a phenomenon that deserves to be investigated. It is hoped that this article can contribute to overcoming this gap in the study of organizational behavior.

Theoretical Background

The theoretical background is divided into two parts. The first presents the concepts associated with DWE, which will characterize the behaviors reported in the empirical part of the research. In the second part will establish the relationship between the DWE, organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) and intra and extra role activities. It is understood that the DWE can occur in both, intra role activities as in extra role activities, thus, it will be sought to establish this association to identify in the accounts of the empirical part of the research to which extent the behavior is associated.

Discretionary Work Effort

When hiring an employee, the company establishes a formal working relationship with the individual, which is obliged to offer its work force in exchange for a salary. This is the explicit dimension of the relationship,

establishing minimum effort level that the employee must devote to the company. However, as punctuated by Besanko et al. (2013), it is difficult to formalize all aspects of a relationship, therefore, it is possible, continue the authors, to set the amount of hours that the employee will work, but it is impossible to establish the amount of hours that the employee will *work hard*. That *work hard*, with diligence, with dedication, takes on other dimensions of the employment relationship that are not captured by a contract, that as in most contracts, it is incomplete. This something else to engage in the organization, not formalized in the employment contract, can be understood as an effort that is on the volitional power of the individual, it depends on the will to exercise this something more. In organizational perspective, effort levels that exceed what is minimally required are characterized as a discretionary work effort.

It is assigned to Barnard (1938) the first approaches to the notion of discretionary work effort, although the author has not formally defined the construct, nor expressly referred to it as DWE.

In general, the theoretical definitions of DWE consider that it is a volunteer effort of the individual in favor of the organization that goes beyond what is minimally required. Entwistle (2001), for example, defines DWE as the energy under individual's control, beyond what is minimally required by the organization, spent on behalf of the organization and for their benefit.

Parrey (2014) defines DWE as the level of effort that the individual can invest in the performance of their work activities, if he so desires, beyond what is minimally required by the organization. Two central points in this definition are: a) level of effort beyond what is minimally required by the organization and b) if the individual so wishes. In general this is a definition commonly accepted for contemplating the two main behavioral elements of DWE.

Yankelovich and Immerwarhr (1983) defined DWE as the difference between the maximum and minimum amount that the individual could produce in his work, and this is the amount of effort on which the employee has full control. Morris (2009) integrates the three dimensions of DWE considering the economic perspective and the perspective of organizational behavior. While the economic approach emphasizes the **time** dimension, organizational behavior underscores the dimensions **intensity and direction**. According to Morris (2009):

It is the Individual volunteer time contribution, intensity and effort directed to an activity of work, beyond what is minimally required, expected or required by the organization, so that it is consistent with organizational objectives and has, or is desired to have, a beneficial impact to the effectiveness of the organization. (MORRIS, 2009, p. 98).

From DWE's economic approach emerge issues related to incomplete contracts, relationship principal –

agent, monitoring and the role of monetary incentives. From organizational behavior approach emerge issues related to organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), extra role behavior and intra role behavior. This article is restricted to addressing the issues related to organizational behavior.

Discretionary Work Effort and Organizational Citizenship Behavior

Organ, Podsakoff and MacKenzie (2006), when describing the situation that illustrates OCB, report that an employee of an assembly line embarrassed by the work to be done, which was delaying the rest of the process, was aided by his co-workers, normalizing the process flow. This behavior of the co-workers, according to the authors, brings the attributes of what comes to be an OCB:

- a) Spontaneous behavior (discretionary);
- b) There was no exempting from the tasks required by the colleagues who helped;
- c) There was no formal compensation for the assistance provided;
- d) The action contributed to the organization's efficiency.

This set of characteristics of one's organizational behavior Organ, Podsakoff and MacKenzie (2006) call the OCB. Smith et al. (1983) and Organ (1988), as well as other authors, agree with such OCB characteristics, which according to Organ (1988) are about

Individual behaviors that are discretionary, not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal reward system and, altogether, promote the effective functioning of the organization. By discretionary, we mean that the behavior is not a mandatory condition required by the work, that is, by the terms clearly specified in the employment contract with the organization; the behavior is more a matter of personal choice, so that its omission is not generally understood as punishable. (ORGAN, 1988, p. 4).

The perception of what OCB may be varies from person to person, or according to the cultural context in which the organization is inserted, contributing to the complexity of the construct, as explained by Gomes (2011). Farh, Hackett and Chen (2008), for example, developed a meta-analysis involving nineteen empirical studies seeking to understand the relationship between the OCB and the cultural context. The authors concluded that in some Eastern countries, with collectivist orientation, behaviors considered as OCB in the West, with individualistic orientation, are considered *normal* behavior. In short, from Farh, Hackett and Chen (2008) findings, it is possible to infer that the level of economic development, institutional and political arrangements, the organizational environment, history and demographics influence the social standards, organizational contexts,

cultural values of each country and even each organization, impacting the perception of what OCB is, or a normal role behavior.

Organ (1988) presents five dimensions of OCB, called by Tambe and Shanker (2014, p. 68) of the "Big Five Dimensions", represented by:

- a) Altruism: behavior intentionally aimed at helping others;
- b) Conscientiousness: compliance and internalization of organizational standards;
- c) Sportsmanship: cooperate, even if the situation is personally unpleasant, but it will probably promote the collective interest;
- d) Courtesy: concern about others before acting.
- e) Civic Virtue: keep informed of the organization's interest issues, defend it and suggest improvements.

Podsakoff et al. (2000) grouped the OCBs in seven dimensions: help, sportsmanship, organizational loyalty, organizational obedience, civic virtue, self-development and individual initiative. The first six forms have strong adherence to the dimensions of OCB proposed by Organ (1988), while the latter, individual initiative, approaches a behavior that involves acts of creativity, innovation and voluntary assumption of responsibility, approaching the DWE.

Connecting the definition of OCB exposed by Organ (1988), the individual initiative dimension presented by Podsakoff *et al.* (2000), and the definition of DWE given by Morris (2009), it is possible to extract some connection points between DWE and OCB, so that it is possible to establish a connection between the two constructs. Points in common are:

- a) The discretionarity (individual initiative);
- b) Non-recognition by formal organizational rewards systems;
- c) Contribute to the effective functioning of the organization;
- d) Do not exempt the individual from his mandatory activities;

DWE, in turn, can be performed through intra role or extra role behavior.

Discretionary Work Effort, Intra Role and Extra Role Behavior

Gomes (2011) proposes an exploratory map of OCB dimensions, and one of these dimensions is the extra effort: "behaviors beyond the role requirements" (GOMES, 2011, p. 22). Behaviors in which the individual performs activities other than those prescribed by his employment contract, since is it his own initiative, suggest behaviors that go beyond the role of the requirements, according to Gomes (2011). Engaging in an interdisciplinary working group to solve a problem for the organization, for example, would be one of these

Table 1. Interview Guide

Script	Objective
1. Expose the purpose of the interview 2. Ask the person to talk about the activities that he/she plays at work 3. To request the respondent to report on the DWE that was done.	1. Show the interviewer and the purpose of the interview. Set DWE. 2. Know the respondent and make him/her reflect on activities they performed that can be characterized as a DWE. 3. Bring the subject to deepen the reports of behaviors that are characterized as a DWE.

Source: Authors

behaviors, an extra role DWE.

Podsakoff et al. (2000, p. 524), in turn, define individual initiative as "an engagement in activities at a level that goes far beyond what is minimally required or generally expected, due to a voluntary behavior." From this perspective, an employee who is dedicated harder to his activities, to the activities prescribed in his employment contract, the employee who, as put by Besanko et al. (2013), *works hard*, would be playing a DWE through intra role behavior. Take, for example, as will be shown later, an official that, in order to achieve his functional progression, reaches levels two to three times higher than required for the progression. This employee would be playing a DWE through intra role behavior.

Entwistle (2001) differentiates the discretionary effort to prescribed activities inherent to the task (intra role) from not prescribed activities, that are not part of the prescribed duties (extra role). In this perspective, DWE can occur both, in intra role and extra role behavior. Also according to Entwistle (2001), the intra role discretionary effort is a voluntary effort level that goes beyond the minimum level required at work, or in other words, it is employed more effort at work than is required to avoid a reprimand or resignation; it means working as efficiently as possible in the prescribed tasks, above the minimum required.

Amid the context presented and in the light of the above theoretical framework, the aim of this article is to answer the following questions:

- a) What behaviors can be considered as a discretionary work effort?
- b) What behaviors can be considered intra role or extra role?

RESEARCH METHOD

It is adopted a qualitative approach using as methodological strategy the case studies through structured interviews (VERGARA, 2009), based on a script previously developed by the researchers as presented in Tableau 01.

The case study, according to Dias et al. (2008, p. 45), "is characterized as a methodological strategy to be used

for research that seeks to enhance contemporary phenomena, understood in the context of real life." The case study applies, therefore, to this research in order to identify individual behaviors in the organizational context that can be considered as DWE. Search in the perception of individuals behaviors that might be considered, in the light of previously exposed definition, a DWE, causing them to reflect on such behavior.

A total of ten individuals, according to Pires (2008), for an intentional sample of state civil servants and teachers of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) public and private from Salvador, Brazil, and the metropolitan area. The analysis locus, public service and teaching, have attributes that allow a high degree of discretion of activities. From the sample, three individuals are public employees, three are private HEIs teachers and four are professors of public HEIs, with an average age of 52 years, ranging between 45 and 65 years. The average length of service is 21 years, ranging between 5 and 32 years of service. Individuals were selected by accessibility with the aim of identifying through reports the characteristic behaviors of discretionary work effort. The interviews were conducted between October and December of 2014 by the researchers in the respondents work environment. The average length of the interviews was sixteen minutes, the longest being twenty-three minutes and the briefest of eleven minutes. The interviews were preceded by a conversation on the subject to be treated, to give more objectivity in the answers of respondents.

RESULTS

The results allow identifying behaviors that constitute DWE, as shown in Tableau 2.

Some reports suggest that such behaviors are performed unconsciously, as if they were prescribed activities in the employment contract. It was possible to identify behaviors of discretionary effort that were characterized both as extra role as intra role behaviors. For extra role behavior, there is the development of distance learning courses for the organization, coordination of system implementation, the work team

Tableau 2 - EDT Behaviors

Identification	DWE	Quote	Extra role Intra role
State Public Employee	Development of distance learning courses for the organization	"[...] the development of this activity I have no release of my normal activities [...] you end up having to make an extra effort, sometimes hours beyond normal hours of activity. "	Extra role
Respondent A			
Respondent B	System deployment coordination	"[...] not only me, but also a few key people have devoted much beyond the minimum time needed For several nights the team that was in the project gave 120% dedication of time."	Extra role
Respondent C	Working team coordination	"Really I undertook an extra effort. [...] Many times I did this work at lunch, after work, after eighteen hours, so it was a little too long, an extra effort. "	Extra role
Teacher private HEI	Informal monitoring of academic activities	"Not necessarily being there physically, but monitoring that information technology provides today. View the progress of the course not only for the physical issue, but the virtual question. [...] it is not your working hours, but you go there and look if you have any e-mail, answer any student, even not being physically, you end up working. "	Intra role
Respondent D			
Respondent E	Participation in special projects (Income tax)	"It was an extra effort because it was not part of the class grid that we had to teach and nor there was any dismissing of any time that we would have to dedicate to the institution."	Intra role
Respondent F	Publications	"[...] You end up getting involved in the work done, you end up extrapolating and going beyond the minimum that the institution asks. The institution asks for a project, for example, that you develop and you end extrapolating this project [...] Preparation of papers, presentation at conferences and seminars, these are usually my initiative."	Intra papel
Teacher public HEI	Varied tasks	[...] I think, in legal terms, the [<i>institution</i>] requires very little from the teacher, [...] when I do my progression, I score three times more, or four times more than the amount of minimum points required to progress [...]. "	Intra role
Respondent G			
Respondent H	Evaluation Methodology	"I always extrapolate because I choose my valuation methodologies, called summative. One set of evaluations that are developed along the whole semester. "	Intra role
Respondent I	Academic journal coordination	"[...] an activity that I kept for a long time was the Journal, being the editor [...] it was almost an epic thing that gave me a lot of work."	Extra role
Respondent J	Teaching practice	"[...] there is a tool that I use, I might as well do what I do in the classroom as a teacher without using this tool, the <i>moodle</i> . For each face class that I teach, I have a corresponding class in the virtual learning environment; I wouldn't need to do that. "	Intra role

Source: Authors

coordination and coordination of academic journal. The development of distance learning courses for the organization was reported by a public servant, a member of the tax auditor career whose function is to oversee state taxes. For also having an academic career, he develops distance learning courses for the public body he belongs, characterized as an extra role activity. The coordination and system deployment were also reported by a tax auditor, with the same formal powers of the previous interview. Coordination of system implementation (a system of finance) was not part of the regular functions of the respondent. The interviewee C

reported the coordination of a working group that restructured the organization of the library to which it belongs. The management of this library is not part of the regular activities of the server, as well as the coordination of the teamwork mentioned. Coordination of academic journal was reported by a teacher whose employment contract does not set such coordination. The four mentioned cases present DWE characteristics under the extra role dimension, considering that such activities do not integrate the list of activities prescribed in the contract.

The activities described by the interviewees D (Informal

monitoring of academic activities), E (Participation in special projects - Income Tax, F (Publications), G (Various tasks), H (Assessment methodology) and J (Teaching practice), take DWE characteristics in intra role dimension because it is behavior beyond the minimally required to formally prescribed activities. For example, the interviewee D, a teacher accompanying the academic activities of the students at times when she should not be working, through email or on weekends.

Previous activities were not paid by the organization, they did not exempt individuals from their regular activities, and were performed with discretion, by the will of the individual.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

It was attempted with this research to explore DWE and its connections with the OCB and extra role and intra role behavior. It began conceptualizing the constructs, to then establish, from such definitions, common ground that would allow connecting them, in order to infer that the DWE can be considered as one of the manifestations of the OCB, whose behaviors can occur by means of extra role or intra role activities.

Empirical research looked for evidence that might have identified behaviors that characterize as a DWE, through an intentional sample of civil servants and teachers, and to identify whether such behaviors occur through extra role or intra role behavior. The results allow us to state that the DWE is being played by individuals in their organizations, although not always, or most of the time, the individual performs it unconsciously. From the reports of the respondents it was revealed that they only associate the behavior to a discretionary effort after clarified the concept of the construct.

In an organizational context that is increasingly competitive on the one hand, and on the other with the ease of access to technology that enables and facilitates the use of DWE, it is interest of managers to develop mechanisms to promote the use of DWE, because this may prove to be a competitive advantage.

Some studies begin to be developed in Brazil, like Milhome and Gonzalez (2015), who investigated the motivations for public servants to employ DWE. The authors found evidence that factors related to job satisfaction, personal matters, and others related to the meaning of work act as motivators for the use of DWE. In line with the reports of this research, Milhome and Gonzalez (2015) found no evidence that financial factors influence the nature of DWE. These findings instigate the investigation of DWE, considering that it seems to be a construct related to organizational behavior not yet explored by research in Brazil.

It is concluded, from the reports of respondents, that DWE is a reality that is present in organizations,

however, both employees and organizations seem to have not yet awakened to the phenomenon. Several investigated behaviors possess the characteristics of a DWE. Organizations are interested in understanding such behaviors as they can contribute to the effectiveness of its operations. Employees are interested in awakening to the awareness that may be playing a DWE on behalf of the organization. It is hoped that this article contribute to a better understanding of DWE, identifying behaviors that are characterized as such, increasing their understanding and opening up new perspectives for future research.

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