

FEELINGS AND PERSPECTIVES OF CIVIL SERVANTS FROM A PUBLIC UNIVERSITY FACING RETIREMENT

SENTIMENTOS E PERSPECTIVAS DE TRABALHADORES DE INSTITUIÇÃO UNIVERSITÁRIA PÚBLICA FRENTE À APOSENTADORIA

SENTIMIENTOS Y PERSPECTIVAS DE TRABAJADORES DE UNA UNIVERSIDAD PÚBLICA ANTE LA INMINENCIA DE LA JUBILACIÓN

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ABSTRACT

The present study aimed to identify the feelings and perspectives of public university employees facing retirement. This is a quantitative study carried out with 82 workers in pre-retirement stage who participated in a retirement preparatory program. Results revealed that retirement is perceived as a well-deserved rest and as being part of life's natural process. Feelings of freedom, satisfaction, anxiety, fear and unhappiness became evident, though. After retirement the employees intend to dedicate themselves to leisure activities, arts and crafts, exercising, spending more time with their families, doing technical courses, taking care of themselves or taking up a new job - other than their previous ones. Forty eight point eight of the responses showed the wish to work after retirement; 57.3 % reported that they were not prepared yet for retirement. The results of this study emphasize the importance of retirement programs in order to assist employees in coping with their expectations and needs during this stage of their professional and personal life.

Keywords: Retirement; Employment; Aging; Emotions; Occupational Health.

RESUMO

Este estudo teve por objetivo identificar os sentimentos e perspectivas de trabalhadores de uma instituição universitária pública frente à aposentadoria. Trata-se de estudo quantitativo, desenvolvido com 82 trabalhadores em fase de pré-aposentadoria, participantes de um Programa de Preparação para a Aposentadoria. Os resultados demonstraram que a aposentadoria é percebida como o descanso merecido e um processo natural da vida. Sentimentos como liberdade, satisfação, ansiedade, medo e infelicidade ficaram evidentes. As atividades que os servidores pretendem realizar na aposentadoria são: atividades de lazer, trabalhos manuais, exercício físico, desempenhar outro trabalho, dar mais atenção à família, cuidar de si e fazer cursos profissionalizantes. O desejo de trabalhar após a aposentadoria foi manifestado em 48,8% das respostas; 57,3% relataram não terem se preparado para a aposentadoria. Os resultados reforçam a importância dos programas de preparação para aposentadoria, a fim de auxiliar no enfrentamento das expectativas e anseios dessa fase da vida profissional e pessoal dos trabalhadores.

Palavras-chave: Aposentadoria; Emprego; Envelhecimento; Emoções; Saúde do Trabalhador.

RESUMEN

Este estudio tuvo como objetivo identificar los sentimientos y perspectivas de empleados de una universidad pública ante la inminencia de la jubilación. Se trata de un estudio cuantitativo realizado con 82 empleados en etapa de pre jubilación que participaban en el Programa de Preparación para la Jubilación. Los resultados mostraron que los empleados encaraban la jubilación como un merecido descanso y un proceso natural de la vida. Quedaron evidentes los sentimientos de libertad, satisfacción, ansiedad, miedo y tristeza. Los trabajadores tenían la intención de dedicarse al ocio, a los trabajos manuales, a practicar ejercicios físicos, a trabajar en otra cosa, a dedicarse más a la familia, a cuidarse más y a hacer cursos de formación profesional. Un 48,8 % de las respuestas indicó deseos de trabajar después de la jubilación; el 57,3 % que no se habían preparado para la jubilación. Los resultados refuerzan la importancia de los programas de preparación para la jubilación con miras a ayudar a hacer frente a las expectativas y anhelos de esta etapa de la vida profesional y personal de los trabajadores.

Palabras clave: Jubilación; Empleo; Envejecimiento; Emociones; Salud Laboral.

INTRODUCTION

The Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) published in 2010 data revealing an increase at the top of the Brazilian age pyramid, showing that the population aged 65 or more had grown in the last years (4.8% in 1991 to 7.4% in 2010). Therefore, the absolute growth of the population in the past 10 years was mainly due to the increase in the number of adults and elderly people.¹

Ageing is directly related to those workers in retirement process. It triggers changes in the individuals' daily routine, in their social life and in the labour market. This life stage is characterized by physical, mental, cognitive and social losses, hence the feeling of vulnerability.²

Having a job can be a source of distress or gratification. Many people build their lives and are inserted into the social world thanks to it. It is not only a means of survival, but also of professional and personal satisfaction.³

The retirement process can bring happiness and satisfaction but it can also be a time of anxieties and insecurity since work environment is crucial to organization and social inclusion - it is connected to establishing relationships and it is intrinsic to the constitution of human identity.⁴ Therefore, pre-retirement is a stage in which people should start planning a new life and decide when it is best to retire.⁵

Actions directed to the pensioners' quality of life should consider the meanings of being retired and its significance to the individual; retirement is a transition stage that can threaten people's mental balance by threatening their identity as a person and as a social being.⁶

This study aimed at identifying the feelings towards retirement and the perspectives of employees of a public university facing such process.

METHOD

This is a descriptive quantitative study carried out at a public university north of the state of Paraná. The researchers approached 82 participants in a series of lectures within the Retirement Preparation Program 2011 edition. The lectures addressed legal, economic, health promotion, community resources, among others, to help the employees face their new life stage.

Data were collected through a questionnaire with multiple-choice questions in order to characterize the population and four subjective questions which answer the study objectives. Those are as follows: a) What do you think about retirement? b) Which pursuits do you want to follow after retirement? c) Do you plan to continue working after retirement? Why? d) In your life, did you somehow prepare yourself for retirement? How?

Data were collected during the participants' first lecture.

The results of the multiple choice questions were tabulated in Microsoft Excel 2010 program and analysed by simple percentage.

The answers to the open-ended questions were analysed according to Bardin's theory.⁷ Data were then classified into categories and the percentages of the frequency of each response calculated. Narratives of the participants were used to exemplify the results. The letter Q for "Questionnaire" followed by the questionnaire number ensured the anonymity of the participants.

The research was approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the institution where the study was carried out and registered in the National Information System on Research Ethics (CAAE No. 0149.0.268.000-10). All participants signed a free and informed consent.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study subjects comprised 82 employees with a mean age of 55.4 years. They were asked about what retirement means for a worker. Study carried out in the same institution, in 2011, revealed that 1,048 employees were in a pre-retirement programme.⁸ However only a small percentage attended the meetings of the Retirement Planning Programme (PPA).

Working is not only a source of income, but a way to organize schedules and daily routines, to establish plans, goals and ends, to build relationships, to be creative; it ensures independence and expresses productivity. Therefore, most people do not accept retirement and many do not think about it since work represents their social identity.^{6,9}

A considerable number of participants had a high education level: 39% had post-graduation and 18.3% university degree. This could be explained by the fact that the institution gives its employees the opportunity to progress their careers through a career development programme, regulated by law,¹⁰ an incentive for academic specializations leading to wage increase.

Results showed that 41.4% of employees had been working 21 to 30 years at the institution; 32.9% 11 to 20 years; and 24.3% over 30 years. Most of them did not have another job. Job stability is regulated by Article 41 of the Federal Constitution, which offers "job stability after three years of effective exercise to civil servants selected by public examination".¹¹ Brazilian legislation motivates the employee to remain at the same institution often until retirement.

An analysis of the health condition of the respondents revealed that 55.6% self-reported conditions, such as musculoskeletal diseases, hypertension, diabetes *mellitus* and hypothyroidism. Under such conditions the authors raised some questions about the respondents' quality of life after retirement, since health is fundamental at this stage.

Retirement is related to longevity and experts recommend habits conducive to good health, which is directly proportional to an individual's longevity.¹² This life stage should motivate

the retirees to reflect about their existence, in the sense that despite achieving their goals, they have probably also suffered many losses and their health is usually the most affected.¹³

The study results highlight another aspect: the employees' Body Mass Index (BMI). One participant had low weight, thirty-four had normal weight and forty-seven were overweight. This may be due to lack of physical activity since 72% of respondents worked full-time and may have had no time or the inclination to practice physical exercises. Repetitive work routine, repetitive and long work hours can contribute to the adoption of a sedentary lifestyle in detriment of healthy routine and physical activities. Maybe the acceleration of the aging process, the increase of bone mass loss, and the beginning of muscle and cardiac problems ought to also be considered. Moreover, stress can also cause physical and psychological problems.⁷

When asked what they thought about retirement, 12 (14.6%) employees said it was a well-earned rest and a natural life process, as can be seen in the following responses:

It's a time to rest and to start on new activities without so many duties. (Q62).

It'll be a time for me to do what I feel better doing and the hours will better suit my private life (Q6).

A study carried out with directors of large private and public institutions in New Zealand and in Brazil revealed that retirement is a time to rest, to dedication to leisure, pleasure and even a way to stop performing unpleasant activities.¹⁴

Another research concluded that retirement was a prospect to fill the time once dedicated to work, immediately and primarily, with travelling. However, the expectations to fill the schedule with leisure activities was often invaded by economic uncertainties that could enable the fulfilment of said expectations.¹⁵

The responses showed that 51.2% of the participants expressed positive feelings about retirement, such as freedom (33.0%) and satisfaction (18.2%), as in the following narratives:

Retirement will be a time to think and do what I want, freely (Q18).

It is a reward after so much time dedicated to work (Q74).

Negative feelings represent 17% of the responses being anxiety, fear, unhappiness and lower pay the most common:

Doubts, fear and insecurity (Q28).

Many employees do not arrive at retirement with the same pay, that's because they get sick before that happens (Q2).

A study carried out with six pensioners of the Public State Service and the National Social Security Institute (INSS) demonstrated that four participants had positive views about the process, associating it with the end of a life stage. The other two interviewees experienced it as a negative event due to decreased income.¹⁶

A research promoted by the Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation (HSBC) carried out worldwide with 21,000 people in 20 countries, revealed that retirement is experienced with feelings of freedom (69%), satisfaction (66%), happiness (62%), fear (26%), boredom (25%) and loneliness (23%).¹⁷

Concerning the activities the individuals intend to apply themselves to after retirement, the study highlights: leisure activities (36.6%), arts and crafts (25.6%), physical exercise (10.9%), a different job (29, 3%), family dedication (15.8%), to take care of them (4.9%) and attend training courses (12.2%).

Retirement can mean an opportunity to spend more time with a partner, children and friends; to go on pleasure trips; to practice sports; to participate in cultural activities; to take up hobbies; to carry out personal development projects related to one's health or finances; to conduct an activity that furthers a feeling of personal achievement.^{11,18}

Table 1 shows the results related to the pre-retirees' wish to work after retirement.

Table 1 - Pre-retirees expectations of working after retirement, Londrina, 2011

| Expectations | n | % |
|--------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| To work after retirement | 40 | 48.8 |
| Not to work after retirement | 24 | 29.3 |
| Maybe to work after retirement | 12 | 14.6 |
| Did not answer | 6 | 7.3 |
| Total | 82 | 100 |

Source: the authors (2013).

According to Table 1, the wish to continue working after retirement was stated by 48.8% of the pre-retirees. They plan to carry on working for them to preserve their lifestyle, continue having an active life, be economically independent, feel useful and avoid idleness, have time to pursue pleasurable activities, have a financial backing, acquire knowledge and impart it to others and to keep mentally healthy.

Such data confirms other studies which emphasize that working after retirement means to feel productive, contributes to an increase in the family income – even a low salary means a great recognition – in addition to fulfil the need to meet other people, to feel updated, physically active, to have something important to do, and to keep the mind stimulated.^{17,19,20}

Some people return to the labour market because that makes them feel important, given the psychological and so-

cial influence of a determined milieu in the construction of ones' identity.¹⁹

Regarding the preparation for retirement, 57.3% of the participants said they were not prepared for the event; 9.8% did not answer. Those who considered themselves prepared (32.9%) mentioned their search for financial and emotional information, health care, researches on retirement and ways to keep on being independent.

The data underline the importance of the Retirement Preparation Program in the institution, which enables the employees to reflect about their life at that stage, so they can make the most of it.

Such projects enabled the researchers to include important issues such as work, health, relationships, leisure, among others, emphasizing their positive aspects and providing opportunities to reflect on the negative aspects of the transition, as well as to discuss the alternatives to deal with difficulties.²¹

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This study found that retirement is perceived by pre-retirees as a well-deserved rest and natural life process. Feelings like freedom, satisfaction, anxiety, fear and unhappiness became evident after thinking about the meaning of retirement. The desire to work after retirement was mentioned in 48.8% of the responses.

The lack of planning to face this stage was evident: most of the employees said they were not prepared to deal with the process. Therefore, the implementation of retirement planning could help people think about their expectations and desires of work and personal life at this stage, reflecting directly on their quality of life.

Programmes dealing with the main aspects of retirement could be an important management tool. Furthermore, such programmes could back workers to better cope with this distressful stage of life.

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